DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 346 858 IR 054 059

AUTHOR Robbins, Jane; And Others
TITLE Evaluation Strategies and Techniques for Public Library Children's Services: A Sourcebook.
INSTITUTION Wisconsin Univ., Madison. School of Library and Information Studies.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 299p.; Based on presentations given and materials used in Institute on Evaluation Strategies and Techniques for Public Library Children's Services (Madison, WI, May 1989).
AVAILABLE FROM Publications Office, University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Library and Information Studies, 600 North Park St., Madison, WI 53706 ($18 prepaid).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Libraries; Childrens Literature; Data Analysis; Discussion (Teaching Technique); Evaluation Criteria; *Evaluation Methods; Interviews; Library Administration; Library Collection Development; Library Planning; Library Research; *Library Services; Library Statistics; *Public Libraries; Questionnaires; Surveys

ABSTRACT

The 28 papers in this sourcebook relate to the evaluation of children's services in public libraries: (1) "Introduction to Evaluation" (Jane Robbins and Douglas Zweizig); (2) "Research and Measurement in Library Services to Children" (Adele Fasick); (3) "Evaluating Children's Services" (Diana Young); (4) "What Is Good about Children's Library Service--How Can You Tell?" (Karen Krueger); (5) "Evaluation of Children's Services" (Mary Chelton); (6) "Looking Around" (Charles McClure, et al.); (7) "Information To Support Planning for Children's Services" (Douglas Zweizig); (8) "Systematic Observation" (Jane Robbins); (9) "Interviewing Young Children" (Lynn McDonald and Holly Willett); (10) "Interviewing Using Micro-moments and Backward Chaining" (Eliza Dresang); (11) "Sampling" (Jane Robbins); (12) "Introduction to Sampling in a Nutshell'" (Morris Slonim); (13) "Questionnaires" (Jane Robbins); (14) "Construction of the Questionnaire in Survey Research" (Barbara Moran); (15) "Examples of Questionnaires Designed To Deal with Children's Services"; (16) "Introducing an Environment Rating Scale for Public Library Children's Services (Holly Willett); (17) "Sampling" (Nancy Van House, et al.); (18) "National Statistics on Public Library Service to Children: Why and How To Get Them" (Mary Jo Lynch); (19) "Output Measures for Children's Services in Wisconsin Public Libraries" (Douglas Zweizig, Joan Braune and Gloria Waity); (20) "Managing Children's Library Collections Through Objective Data" (Craighton Hippenhammer); (21)"Book Discussion as an Evaluation Tool" (Holly Willett); (22) "Beyond Reviews: Using Book Discussion as a Method for New Materials Selection" (Kathleen Horning); (23) "Use of Discussion in Reconsideration of a Title" (Dianne Hopkins); (24) "Discussion for Awards and Distinctions" (Eliza Dresang); (25) "Guidelines for Book Discussions" (Ginny Kruse and Kathleen Horning); (26) "Commentary on an Approach to Discussion: The CCBC Guidelines for Book Discussion" (Holly Willett); (27) "The Politics of Evaluation" (Jane Goodwin); and (28) "Reporting the Results of Library Research" (W. Boyd Rayward). (MAB)

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Evaluation Strategies and Techniques for Public Library Children's Services: A Sourcebook

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School of Library and Information Studies
1990

Preface

This Sourcebook is based upon presentations given and material used in a five–day Institute on Evaluation Strategies and Techniques for Public Library Children's Services funded by the United States Department of Education and sponsored by the School of Library and Information Studies of the University of Wisconsin—Madison in May 1989. Fifty participants from twenty–five states were selected from over 125 applicants to attend. A mixture of professional interests were represented including coordinators of children's departments in large metropolitan public libraries, consultants in children's services for public library systems and for state library agencies as well as educators of future children's librarians.

The Sourcebook is intended for use by anyone with responsibility for providing beginning or continuing education for children's services librarians. It articulates, within the constraints of a single volume, the evaluation concerns that are pertinent to the community of those who serve children through public libraries as we move into the last decade of the twentieth century.

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I. Planning and Evaluation

Introduction

According to one prominent evaluator, the purpose of evaluation is not to prove, but to improve. Often when we think of evaluation, what comes to mind is some final judgment of worth or of making a good enough case so that your program survives. But these purposes of evaluation are seen as missing the mark. Evaluation, as we're seeing it for this Sourcebook, is an assessment of work in progress, a means of informing decisions. Evaluation asks the question, "Are we there yet?" and we're always in the process of arriving.

In this Sourcebook, we are presenting a variety of evaluation approaches in the context of public library children's services. In this chapter, the articles deal with the role of evaluation in the planning process, the importance of being clear about the target that is sought, and the gathering of information about the contexts in which our services occur.

This Sourcebook advocates minimalist planning—and continual planning. Our definition of planning is "a series of successive approximations to a moving target." The implication of a series is that there is never a final plan or evaluation. Planning and evaluation to be useful in improvement of services must be a regular and repeated activity. The corollary to that conclusion is that planning and evaluation must be inexpensive—not elaborate—or libraries cannot afford to carry it out repeatedly. The evaluation approaches included in this Sourcebook are ones that can be carried out with little effort or expenditure.

This section is titled "planning and evaluation," and it may be well to think of them as one word: "planningandevaluation" because it doesn't seem sensible to think of planning without evaluation or of evaluation in the absence of planning. Planning is the process of selecting targets for achievement; evaluation is the process of assessing how close we are to achieving the target.

This Introduction will quickly point to the planning and role setting process recently published by the Public Library Association (PLA) and at evaluation's place in it. We can make a number of observations about this process.

First, it is cyclical. If the process is used as an on-going series of repetitions, then it doesn't matter where the library starts in the process, the library will eventually complete all seven steps, and the point at which it began will be inconsequential. A more pertinent point is that evaluation can and should occur at every step of the cycle. When Preparing to Plan, the staff's capabilities at planing, the previous experience with planning, and the constraints that may limit planning decisions can all be assessed. Looking Around consists of evaluating the context in which the library is

operating and the performance of the library, to produce findings that will guide subsequent planning steps. Developing Roles and Mission involves weighing the various potential roles the library might adopt to select a limited number to pursue. Likewise, Writing Goals and Objectives involves selecting the best targets from among the many possible. Taking Action requires two kinds of evaluations: assessing alternative courses of action before settling on one to carry out and comparing the progress of the selected course of action with the expected schedule or intermediate targets. The Review and Recycling step is the one we would generally associate with evaluation—the step where achievements are compared with intentions, and decisions are made about continuing existing programs or substituting others.

So, there are many micro-opportunities for evaluation within the macro planning process: surveys can be used to assess staff attitudes toward planning or citizen awareness of services; output measures can be used to identify problems in performance or to check on progress.

The Roles and Mission step deserves some particular attention. Planning involves making choices—choices to carry some things out and choices, implicitly or explicitly, not to carry out other things. As Peter Drucker has observed, setting priorities is easy, deciding on posteriorities is tough. To aid public libraries in this necessary step, the Public Library Association has identified eight role options for libraries.*

PUBLIC LIBRARY ROLES

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES CENTER
COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTER
FORMAL EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTER
INDEPENDENT LEARNING CENTER
POPULAR MATERIALS LIBRARY
PRESCHOOLER'S DOOR TO LEARNING
REFERENCE LIBRARY
RESEARCH CENTER

* Martin, Lowell. "The Public Library: Middle-age Crisis or Old Age Crisis," *Library Journal* 108 (January 1, 1983): 17-22.

Note that these roles are not age specific. The intention was that youth services could pursue any of these roles. If the library decided to emphasize Popular Materials Library and Reference Library as primary roles, youth services could participate in those roles along with services to adults. The only age-related role is Preschooler's Door to Learning, and this was intended to reflect the particular quality of the service rather than the age of the clientele. Unfortunately, some have seen that role as the only place for youth services, and some have even renamed the role as Children's Door to Learning so that all of children's services could be included in it. The effect of this change is to once again segregate youth services as separate from the rest of the library's program of services—the very effect the Public Library Association wanted to avoid. A suggestion has been made that this role should be called Door to Learning and should include adult literacy services as well as services to preschoolers, and the next edition may well reflect that change.

To return to the Roles and Mission step: PLA recommends that a library choose one or two of the roles as primary and one or two as secondary, the remaining roles to be performed at a maintenance level and to consume, together, no more than 20% of the library's effort. The purpose of this role selection is for the library "to concentrate and strengthen," as Lowell Martin put it—so the planning process acts like a funnel: wide open initially when the looking around is taking place and narrowed by the roles choice so that the choice of goals and objectives is within the areas of priority.

It is helpful to see the roles, goals, and objectives as kinds of statements that have different functions. A role is a description of a service profile that gives an image of the kind of library the community will have. A goal is a statement of an ideal for the library, an end toward which the library intends to move, the Man from La Mancha's "unreachable star." An objective states how far toward the ideal end the library intends to move during the period being planned. While goals are by definition unattainable, objectives are attainable, measureable, and dated (so one knows when they should be attained.) The objective needs to include a measure of attainment—how far the library has progressed toward its goal.

The following scheme illustrates how these parts flow from one to the next.

ROLE	Who we are [example: COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES CENTER]
↓	
GOAL	What direction we're heading [example: TO INCREASE USE OF THE LIBRARY]
↓	
OBJECTIVE	How far we're going this time [example: TO INCREASE LIBRARY VISITS PER CAPITA FROM 3.5 TO 4.5 BY JUNE 1, 1990]
↓	
OUTPUT MEASURE	How we'll tell whether we're there [example: LIBRARY VISITS PER CAPITA]

To give libraries some measures they can use for this purpose, PLA has developed ***Output Measures for Public Libraries****. These are twelve ready-made measures that libraries can use if they fit the library's objectives. The following lists the output measures grouped under their related goal areas:*

GOALS MEASURED BY OUTPUT MEASURES:

REACHING MAXIMUM # OF PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY
- LIBRARY VISITS PER CAPITA
- REGISTRATION AS A % OF POPULATION

MAXIMIZING USE OF MATERIALS
- CIRCULATION PER CAPITA
- IN-LIBRARY MATERIALS USE PER CAPITA
- TURNOVER RATE

GOALS MEASURED BY OUTPUT MEASURES: (continued)

PROVIDING READY ACCESS TO MATERIALS

- TITLE FILL RATE
- SUBJECT AND AUTHOR FILL RATE
- BROWSERS' FILL RATE
- DOCUMENT DELIVERY

PROVIDING INFORMATION IN RESPONSE TO QUERIES

- REFERENCE TRANSACTIONS PER CAPITA
- REFERENCE COMPLETION RATE

PROVIDING INFORMATIONAL PROGRAMMING

- PROGRAM ATTENDANCE PER CAPITA

If the library has an objective that corresponds to one of the output measures, it can use the following ***GENERIC OBJECTIVE FORM:*** *To increase* ***(name of output measure)*** *from* ***(current number)*** *to* ***(desired number)*** *by* ***(date)****. For example: "To increase circulation per capita from 4.0 to 5.0 by October 1, 1989." or "To increase registration as a percentage of population from 27% to 40% by October 1, 1989."*

If the library is seeking to attain some other end than is measured by an existing output measure, it will need to invent or locate a measure that will allow it to conclude whether it has attained the desired end or not. Often we can identify the needed measure by returning to the evaluations conducted in the Looking Around stage, where we assessed needs, to recall what data were used to document the need. The same kind of evidence may be used to assess the degree to which the need was met.

Mary Kay Chelton has a useful discussion and illustration of goals and objectives on pages 55 in this Sourcebook. Adaptations of output measures to specifically measure children's services can be found in Douglas L. Zweizig, Joan A. Braune, and Gloria A. Waity, ***Output Measures for Children's Services in Wisconsin Public Libraries,*** *Madison: School of Library and Information Studies, University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1989. Selections from this report are found on pages 207-222.*

This discussion of planning and evaluation has not addressed activities, the step in the planning process that is called "taking action." That was neglected in order to concentrate on the hard part—the part where the library has to decide what the needs are and what the library should be trying to attain. Taking Action deals with the means for responding to needs, and humans seem to find it easier to focus on means than to clarify our purposes or ends.

The first item in this chapter presents an overview of an evaluation process that can be used for planning and evaluation of a specific project or of the overall library program. In it, Robbins and Zweizig provide a guide for minimalist planning. This is followed by an insightful discussion by Adele Fasick of the complexities, necessities, and possiblities for evaluation of children's services. Diana Young continues these themes by presenting a structure for organizing the evaluation of services to children and by suggesting relevant questions to be asked about the various asspects of the service. Karen Krueger illustrates the importance of being clear about what it is you want to accomplish by providing examples of targets selected for serving children. May Kay Chelton's "Evaluation of Children's Services" instructs the reader in issues and methods of evaluation and provides sample questionnaires from actual evaluations that can be adapted to different settings.

*In order to support the evaluation of the context of children's services, the chapter on "Looking Around" is reprinted from Charles R. McClure, Amy Owen, Douglas L. Zweizig, Mary Jo Lynch, Nancy Van House, **Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries; A Manual of Options and Procedures**, Chicago: American Library Association, 1987. This chapter is followed by a workform designed to organize the data gathered in the Looking Around process: "Information to Support Planning for Children's Services."*

Overall, the intent of this chapter of the Sourcebook is to provide a framework for understanding the planning and evaluation processes and to give some concrete suggestions for proceeding.

Introduction to Evaluation

Jane Robbins and Douglas L. Zweizig

Excerpted from *Are We There Yet?*,
School of Library and Information Studies,
University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1988

The term "evaluation" is likely to bring to mind the question, "How good is it?" But "Compared to what?" is the key question to ask. Evaluation implies a final judgment of value made by comparing the thing evaluated with some standard. Evaluation in the library requires that some characteristic of the library be observed and then compared against a standard. Which standard? There are a number of sources:

- A national or state library association may set standards for libraries.
- An outside evaluator may judge an individual library against the standard of other libraries the evaluator has knowledge of.
- A library may compare itself with a neighboring or peer library ("Keeping up with the Joneses").
- A library may evaluate actual performance in terms of deadlines or budgets used as standards.

Standards that come from outside a library may not be relevant to it; thus a library must choose carefully.

The purpose of evaluation is not just to know whether to feel good about some aspect of the library. Its purpose is to allow us to make better decisions about the library—to identify aspects that might be improved and functions that need to be speeded up or made less expensive. Rather than asking "How good is it?" this series of tutorials will ask "Are we *there* yet?"—a question the authors feel better reflects the uses to be made of the evaluation. This question sees evaluation as a process of checking on a regular basis to determine how much progress has been made towards a stated goal.

The question "Are we *there* yet?" grows out of our working definition of planning, which is "a series of successive approximations towards a moving target." That is, planning involves a repeating process, a series, through which the library moves closer to its intended goal, the target. However, while the library is carrying out its plan, the demands being made on the library and the characteristics of its environment change; the target moves even as we attempt to approach it.[1] Assume, for example, that a library's target is to achieve an average processing cost of $3.25 per item processed. If the price of card stock increases greatly or if the library decides to go to an online catalog, the target of $3.25 will no longer be appropriate and will have to be changed. Planning's role is to select the target and to review whether that target has moved. Evaluation's place in the planning process is to periodically assess how much closer we are to the target.

It is probably clear to the reader that our concept of evaluation is so intertwined with planning that both must be dealt with in evaluating any aspect of library operations. Knowing what to evaluate requires knowing what was planned. If you are not clear where you want to go, then how do you know when you have arrived?

The Planning Process

Although planning processes may differ in the number of steps required or the way the steps are labeled, most follow the same reasoning. For this series, we will use the steps found in ALA's publication, *A Planning Process for Public Libraries*.[2] The ways this process labels the steps in planning can readily be adapted for any type of library situation. The eight basic steps are:

1. **Assess community and library environment.** This step involves looking at the context of the library. What kind of community or institution do we serve? What kind of people are our users? What kinds of facilities are in the community?
2. **Evaluate current library services and resources.** What is the library now doing? What is the library working with? What problems are now obvious?
3. **Determine the role of the library in its community.** What kind of library should we be for this community at this time?

4. **Set goals, objectives, and priorities.** Different planning processes define the terms "goal" and "objective" differently. In this process, *goals* are general statements of the directions the library will move in; they are not time–bound and are intended to be finally achieved: "Our goal is to increase the use of the library." *Objectives* are more specific statements of what the library will try to achieve by the end of each planning period. They need to be clear, measurable in some way, and have a deadline: "Our objective is to increase users from 30% to 40% of our potential users by Sept. 30, 1986." *Priorities* are needed to assure that the most important objectives receive emphasis during a particular planning period.
5. **Develop and evaluate strategies for change.** There are many ways to increase the use of the library. This step in the process involves reviewing the means available to the library and selecting the means to be used: "To increase use, we will produce a guide to the use of the library."
6. **Implement strategies.** This is the process of carrying out selected strategies.
7. **Monitor and evaluate progress towards goals and objectives.** *As the plan is being carried out*, the selected strategies are monitored to be sure that things are happening as planned and on time. *As the deadline for the objective occurs*, an evaluation determines whether the targets were achieved; for example, whether users increased from 30% to 40% of the potential user community. *At the end of the planning period*, a review of progress determines whether overall use is increasing.
8. **Review and update goals, objectives, and priorities.** Throughout the planning process, and particularly at the close of the planning cycle, goals, objectives and priorities are reviewed for appropriateness. Is increased use still an appropriate goal? Should the specific level of use to be achieved be increased or decreased? Should this area of service receive the same priority in the future? As progress is made and conditions change, these decisions need to be reexamined.

Although the planning process presents a series of steps with clear beginning and end points, the process is in fact cyclical and can be begun at any point. A library could begin to set goals, objectives, and priorities for the next year (step 4), without a formal review of the community or the library. In the midst of this process, the library could go back to step 1 to learn more about the community, and so on. A planning process provides a checklist and a structure for making planning decisions, but a library may use the

process in the ways most suited to its situation. Although we most often think of evaluation occurring at step 7, it can occur at many points in the planning process.

The remainder of this book will look at approaches to evaluation in a number of areas of interest to librarians: collections, reference services, library service programs, and personnel. In each of these areas, we will use the same process for evaluation. As we mentioned above, evaluation may occur at various steps in the planning process. It may be used to examine how well the library is achieving its ends (goals and objectives) or how well it is carrying out its means to those ends (the strategies).

We have separated the evaluation process into seven steps for the sake of clarity, but this does not mean it is an elaborate process. The whole process could be recorded on a half sheet of paper (see Evaluation Summary, next page).

EVALUATION SUMMARY SHEET

- **DETERMINE TARGET AREA:**

Target	Actual	Difference

- **HOW WILL YOU KNOW? (procedures for collecting data):**

- **SO WHAT?:**

- **RETHINKING DECISIONS:**

The Evaluation Process

1. Determine the target area.

The target area can refer to what you want to accomplish (effectiveness) or to how well you want to do it (efficiency). The process is very similar to determining a goal in planning. For example, a target area in reference may be the accuracy of answers to reference questions or the speed of service provided. In program evaluation, the target area may be what was learned in a workshop for library staff or how the workshop participants liked the workshop. A helpful question for determining the target area is, "What do you want to know about?" The answer may be that you want to know about several things. In such a case, each of those things is a separate target area. A description of each target area should be listed on a separate Evaluation Summary.

2. Set the target.

For each target area selected, a target needs to be set. That is, each target area identifies the aspect of library operations you want to evaluate, but the target is the specific standard you will compare your results against. The target should be measurable (i.e., expressed in a number), or at least observable (i.e., you should be able to tell unambiguously whether you've done it or not). Example of measurable targets are: reduce cost to $5 per item processed by Dec. 31, 1986; achieve an average score of 85 on the knowledge test at the end of the workshop; increase percentage of users from 30% to 40% of potential users by Sept. 30, 1986. Examples of observable targets are: complete budget proposals by June 30, 1986; obtain approval for policy manual by May 30, 1986. The target should be entered on the Evaluation Summary.

Target

3. How will you know?

Sometimes the information that tells you whether the target has been met is obvious. At other times, you must make decisions about the data required to determine how close you have come to the target. How will you know, for example, whether costs have been reduced to $5 per item? If procedures are needed for the collecting of relevant data, this is the place to spell them out. For example: for the first week in December 1986, the number of items processed will be recorded on a workform by the head of the Processing Department; the Accounting Department will provide personnel cost figures for the Processing Department; the number of processing materials (book pockets, date due slips, etc.) used per item processed will be determined by the department head; the associate director for technical services will enter these data into the formula and calculate the average cost of processing each item. As you design the evaluation, the procedures for gathering the needed data should be entered on the Evaluation Summary.

4. Take a look.

During this step, the evidence needed for the evaluation is gathered in order to produce the figure that corresponds to the target: the cost of processing items, the average score on the knowledge test, the percentage of new users recorded. The actual achievement should be entered on the Evaluation Summary.

Target	Actual

5. How close are you?

At this point, the comparison between the target and the actual figure is made. Judgment should be suspended, and only the facts recorded. The difference between the target and actual performance is usually calculated by subtracting the target from the actual figure, so that if the actual is greater than the target, the difference will be

positive, and if the actual is less than the target, the difference will be negative.

Target	Actual	Difference

6. So what?

When the data on actual performance and the target have been recorded together, someone needs to make a decision about whether to act on any difference between them and what to do. If actual processing costs were $10 per item and the target was $5 per item, several kinds of decisions are possible: procedures in the Processing Department may be streamlined in order to reduce costs; processing may be contracted out to a processing center at a cost closer to the target; the target may need to be set at a different level if the original level did not anticipate a change in the costs of processing supplies. The decisions should be recorded on the Evaluation Summary.

7. Rethink.

Each step in the evaluation process may result in learning more about the aspect of the library being evaluated. The library may have selected a target area that is too difficult or too expensive to measure and may need to refine it. If the library does not have enough information to set a target, it may need to collect some data before setting one. Changes that occurred after the target was set may require rethinking the target. At any stage of the evaluation, a library manager may decide to go back and "fix up" some earlier step. This procedure is not only appropriate, it is necessary if the evaluation is to be useful. In recording the process and results of the evaluation, however, changes that resulted from rethinking should also be recorded so that a reader will know what you've done.

Finally, although such a step is beyond the evaluation process itself, it is important to communicate the results of an evaluation. Staff needs to know the library's targets and how they are doing in approaching the targets. Evaluation results can highlight in specific figures for the tight-fisted funder the demands made on the

library and the success the library has in meeting such demands. The results can point out library progress in increasing use, the areas where personnel are overextended, or the areas where the collection is unable to respond to demand. In short, the purpose of evaluation is to enable the library to operate better in the future by identifying areas needing improved performance or increased resources.

Our first lesson has presented a generalized evaluation model and related it to the planning process in libraries. Future lessons will apply the model to evaluation of collections, reference, library service programs, and personnel.

Notes

[1]In "The Science of Muddling Through," (*Public Administration Review*, 19 (1959), p. 86), C. E. Lindblom put forth a remarkably similar definition of planning: "Policy-making is a process of successive approximation to some desired objectives in which what is desired itself continues to change under reconsideration."

[2]Vernon E. Palmour, *et al. A Planning Process for Public Libraries*. Chicago: ALA, 1980. See also the more recent Charles R. McClure, *et al. Planning & Role Setting for Public Libraries; A Manual of Options and Procedures*. Chicago: ALA, 1987.

Research and Measurement in Library Services to Children

Adele M. Fasick

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Although service to children has been a part of public library activities for almost a century, there has been increasing concern in recent years about its future. At an American Library Association preconference on children's work [in 1977], F. William Summers said that children's services, once the jewel in the crown of public library service, "may now be seen as a piece of costume jewelry that has grown a bit tawdry and shopworn over the years."[1] The same concern led the coordinators of Children's Services of Large Urban Libraries (Canadian) to prepare a series of recommendations designed to prevent the downgrading of children's services in public libraries.

These recommendations, accepted by the Council of Administrators of Large Urban Public Libraries, express a hope that a continuing dialogue between coordinators and administrators has started.[2] Much of this dialogue will surely touch on measurement and evaluation of children's services, because it is only by such evaluation that priorities for the allocation of library budgets and library personnel can be determined.

Why have librarians engaged in serving children been put on the defensive about the way in which they evaluate their services, and what can be done to bring children's services back into the mainstream of library thinking? Much of the problem rests in explaining to the library community just what children's work is, why it is difficult to evaluate, and what part it plays in the lives of children, as well as in the total picture of library service to the community.

To do this, children's librarians have to come to terms with the increasing demand for quantitative measurement of library services. Why are we being asked for a justification of services that we have been giving satisfactorily for many years? One

reason for this demand is surely the pressure of declining or stationary library budgets at a time of rising inflation, which sends costs spiraling upward every year. All publicly supported services—schools, hospitals, and museums as well as libraries—are being more closely scrutinized because of public demand that tax dollars be spent in ways the public sees as important.

The existence of computers, which enable us to collect and store vast quantities of data, has made it possible to measure and evaluate library use in ways that were prohibitively time-consuming a generation ago. The pressure for budget justification and the existence of tools for manipulating statistics have led librarians in fields other than children's services to adopt a more quantitative approach to the measurement and evaluation of their services. Studies and measurements that began in scientific and technical information centers are being adopted by public and academic libraries.

Services Hard to Evaluate

Some librarians who work with children have avoided justifying their services on a quantitative basis by arguing that the work they do is not measurable, a claim that has led to misunderstanding and sometimes recrimination. There is some justification for this claim, but it seems clear that sooner or later children's librarians are going to have to adopt some forms of objective, quantitative measurements. The major question is whether these measurements will be the most appropriate ones, or whether they will be ones borrowed from other sources and applied willy-nilly to children's services.

Although some of the reaction against quantitative measurement of children's services may be overly emotional, it is not true, as one of my colleagues once suggested, that "children's librarians are people who love children and hate statistics." There are some good reasons for protesting against the imposition of quantitative standards on children's work. There are problems in the evaluation of library services to children that simply do not exist in other types of library work.

Education First Goal

Some of these problems stem from historical conditions. When libraries first opened their doors to children at around the turn of the century, there was a reasonable

consensus about what the library was supposed to do for children. Its first task was to provide educational books. Fiction was considered a frill to be discouraged. One great fear was that too much reading of library books might take children's minds off their schoolwork. The major requirements for children's books in libraries were that they must be both educational and morally unimpeachable.

The public library was viewed as a continuation of school more often than a supplement to it. Since the vast majority of children left school by the time they were fourteen years old, children's services were often designed to serve those young people who had no further access to formal education. Children's libraries served children in their last few years of school, after they had been taught to read. The library was supposed to begin a process of lifelong education by developing in children a habit of reading good literature.

Children's services at that time were much easier to evaluate, because libraries served a narrower age span of children in a comparatively homogeneous society. The library's goals were limited, and few people questioned their value. The library stood alone as the only social agency providing children with books, since most schoolwork was based on textbooks and encouraged little outside reading for classes.

Goals Multiplied

The goals advocated for children's library services today have grown from those comparatively simple beginnings. For example, the public library is often expected to:

- prepare preschool children for their school experiences by introducing them to books and other media;
- provide cultural experiences, such as drama, concerts, and film shows, for children;
- help children adjust to the community in which they live, especially minority children and immigrant children, by providing materials and programs that will keep them in touch with their homelands and introduce them to (their countries') customs;
- prepare children for living in a multicultural society by providing materials and programs on various ethnic groups;

- help children adjust socially and psychologically to the demands of growing up—and this includes children with physical, mental, and psychological handicaps that present severe problems;
- compensate for deficiencies in homes and schools by providing services for children from homes without books, and for children whom the schools have not taught to read adequately;
- provide programs and materials that will compete with television for the children's interest;
- provide entertainment and a meeting place for children who have few other social outlets—especially during school holidays;
- provide supplementary material for school projects, at times when the school libraries are unavailable;
- provide a variety of materials and services that in one way or another will enrich children's lives (these may include toys, games, pets, craft classes, hobby clubs—the list is limited only by the librarians' imagination); and
- develop in children a lifelong love of reading—this is an old goal that has not been discarded.

Not only are all these goals supposed to be met simultaneously and in multimedia form, but services are also supposed to be brought to the children wherever they may be—in playgrounds, housing developments, or day-care centers.

When we consider the size of the tasks suggested for children's services and the difficulty of evaluating any one of them, it is no wonder that librarians protest that they cannot measure their services and present them in neat statistical tables for the annual report.

Children as Clients

As if the multiplicity of goals were not enough, services to children also present problems of measurement because children as clients present some particular difficulties. First of all, many of the children who use our libraries cannot be expected to tell us what they want or let us know how satisfied they are with what they get. When they first come to the library, they may be just beginning to talk, and completely

unable to articulate their reactions. As they grow older, they can tell us what they think of the materials and programs we offer, but as a rule they do not know what else might be provided.

Generally children don't read book reviews, and few of them visit bookstores; as a result they have little idea of what is available. For the most part they accept or reject the library as it is, without believing they could influence what it might be. We found this was true even of ten- to twelve-year-olds in the survey done at the Regina Public Library.

As an added complication, children do not necessarily know what is good for them. They are subject to the direction of other adults, chiefly parents and teachers, who set limits on the kind of materials and services they should get. This means there is another group of people who may not use the collection directly, but those ideas must be taken into account when evaluating services.

Besides this, public library services in most communities are supplemented by school library services. The ideal relationship between these two institutions may vary from one community to another, but there certainly has to be some coordination of services. There is no comparable institution to take into account when evaluating public library service to adults.

Research

This discussion of the difficulties of measuring children's services may paint a bleak picture. Children's services can be measured and evaluated in an objective way, but in order to measure services, we need many more facts than are available at present. This is where we come to the issue of research and what it can do in the field of children's work.

Can research serve a useful purpose? That question is still often asked. The answer is "yes," but only in specific and limited ways. Research, in the broad meaning or a careful, systematic search for new facts, should help in the task of measuring and

evaluating children's services, but it is not a panacea that will solve all library problems.

Research studies can answer questions about what is being done now in public libraries. Despite years of experience, we still cannot answer questions such as:

How much of the community are library services reaching?
How much time is being spent on materials selection, on helping individual children, groups of children; how much staff time is spent in preparing and presenting programs?
How well are reference questions answered? How much time does it take to do reference work with children as compared to adults? How much reference work deals with school-related projects and how much is generated by the children themselves?
Which children do not use the library? Might they become library users under different circumstances? Are the changes necessary to attract them compatible with serving children who already use the library?

The answers to these questions are basic in evaluating how well the children of a community are being served, yet most libraries cannot answer them except by guessing. These questions are limited enough to be answered for a particular community on the basis of a survey. Such a survey would be time-consuming and therefore expensive, and could not be undertaken by every library. But even a limited number of surveys in communities of various sizes and geographic locations would yield valuable information that might be applied more widely. The Regina children's library study was an attempt to answer questions of this type.

Complex Questions

There are other pressing questions that would have to be studied over a period of time, or over a large number of communities, in order to give us useful answers. Some of these questions are:

Do children who use the library when they are young tend to grow up to be library users?

Do children who attend library programs become long-term library users?

Do children move from reading low-quality books (e.g., Enid Blyton or the Hardy Boys) to reading high-quality children's books?

Are there differences in services given in libraries that have children's coordinators as compared with libraries that do not? Are there differences between libraries with children's specialists and those with generalists? What are these differences?

Do outreach programs in playgrounds and housing projects eventually bring children into the library as they grow older and become able to travel?

Do communities with highly developed school library systems have more or fewer public library users? Are the two types of libraries used differently? How?

How is adult use of public libraries affected by children's services?

These questions are not easy to answer, and research studies designed to answer them will be lengthy and expensive. Nonetheless, we are now making policy decisions based on assumptions we have made about the answers to some of these questions, when in fact we cannot demonstrate that our assumptions are correct. If we are ever to build up a body of knowledge on which to base our planning, a start must be made on finding answers.

Limitations of Research

Some of the disillusionment with research studies comes from the fact that librarians are hoping to have questions of value, or policy decisions, answered by research. Questions such as: "Should we buy series books, or comic books, or whatever? Should we integrate our nonfiction children's collection with adult nonfiction? Should we have film shows on Saturday afternoon?" cannot be answered by a survey unless the objective of the change is spelled out.

The question of whether or not to have film shows on Saturday afternoon might have different answers depending on whether the unstated goal is "If we want to get more children into the library to see what we have to offer, should we have film shows on Saturday afternoon?" or "If we want to encourage children to read and use our

collection more, should we have film shows on Saturday afternoon?" or perhaps, "If we want to get more older children into the library should we have film shows on Saturday afternoon or on Friday evening?" The librarian has to think through the purpose for offering any particular program or service before a reasonable research question can be framed.

There are also some questions for which research has no answers. An example would be "Is it better for a child to watch *The Red Balloon* or to read *The Hobbit*?" That question might be answered differently by different people. There probably is no final answer, and certainly no research study will decide the issue.

Another kind of question that research will not answer is that dealing with decisions between individuals, such as which of two candidates to promote to the job of children's coordinator. The issue of which is more important for a children's coordinator, an M.L.S. degree or years of experience, may eventually be answered in general terms such as "coordinators with five or more years of experience tend to do a better job than those without experience," but it can never answer which of two particular individuals will do a better job in a specific situation. Research, in other words, doesn't eliminate the need for making difficult administrative decisions.

These, then, are the most important limitations of research. It cannot answer questions of value—cannot tell you what your goals should be, but only indicate how you might achieve particular goals. It cannot tell you what will happen in a specific case; it can only indicate overall trends or probabilities. A research study might say that circulation would probably be increased if comic books were added to the collection, because 80 percent of children surveyed said they liked comic books. It cannot tell you whether or not you should try to increase your circulation in this way, and it cannot tell you whether eleven-year-old Carol Smith will use the library if comic books are there.

Developing Research

As long as we have reasonable expectations of what research can do for children's services, we have to acknowledge that building up a body of such research would be of

value for measuring and evaluating services. The next question that arises is how this body of research can be developed. There are three major groups of people who have responsibilities toward developing research—the staff working in libraries now, the professional associations, and the library schools.

How reasonable is it to expect library staff members to conduct research? There is only a limited amount that can be done by individual libraries, because of the severe shortage of staff time. In most children's departments, the staff are fully occupied for all their working time. It is unreasonable to suggest that they take on extended research work unless additional staff is provided, or unless other tasks are taken away. It might be possible, for example, to stop presenting story hour programs for a month or two in order to have some time free for a special project. Another possibility is to hire students or part-time help to collect data for a period of time under the supervision of a staff member.

There are some limited studies, especially those that duplicate studies already done in another community, that might be run by a large library system using its own staff. It might also be possible for library personnel to collect data in a standardized way as part of a larger research project, directed from outside their individual library system. These will necessarily be limited projects—useful but not sufficient to provide a large body of research.

The major role of library staff is likely to continue to be to read research studies, to use them as the basis of discussion in staff conferences and meetings, and to try to see how these studies might apply to their own library situations. If they also write up their reactions to the studies and the results of their attempts to apply them, they will be contributing greatly to a body of knowledge about librarianship.

Large libraries and regional systems can contract out research rather than use their own staff. Such research must be published and disseminated in order to make it useful to the profession as a whole. This should be seen as an obligation by those library units large enough to support such studies.

Professional associations have an important role to play in developing and maintaining a usable body of research. The publications of professional associations are the major channel for disseminating research findings. The development of refereed journals for research would be a valuable step toward upgrading the quality of professional publications.

Another role of associations is to use conferences as a forum for the presentation and discussion of research findings. Perhaps for the next few years in particular, conference discussions among children's librarians ought to shift away from emphasis on materials and programming. Despite the importance of these services, it is probably more important at the moment to look at the overall questions of what we know about children's services and what we need to learn.

Still another role professional organizations can play is to serve as coordinating agencies for fund raising. Since most public libraries cannot fund major research studies on their own, regional and national associations may find it possible to bring together libraries that can contribute to cooperative research.

Library Schools Have Major Role

Although librarians working in the field and library associations have roles to play in developing research, neither of these groups can take major responsibility for conducting research. It has often been said that librarians ought to do more research, but when we look at other professions, we can see that this expectation is probably unrealistic. If medical research were considered to be the responsibility of practicing physicians, little would likely be done. In most professions, the professional schools and university faculty in allied fields conduct the basic research. This is likely to be the most fruitful pattern for librarians to follow.[3]

The library schools have a pool of faculty members trained to do research. They also have affiliations with universities, which contain faculty members in other disciplines who can offer specialized help in aspects of research. The responsibilities of the library schools are twofold. The first is to teach students entering the profession to know about and to appreciate the value of research in carrying out their library

responsibilities. Second, faculty members should carry out research that will enrich the materials they are teaching and will also help practitioners in the field.

There are a number of factors that have limited the amount of research that is done. Some of these are internal to the schools—the burden of time-consuming committee work, supervision of students doing practicums, lack of clerical assistance to help with day-to-day routines of teaching and keeping up with the library field. Others are external. Lack of funding is certainly important, but probably the most important single reason for a lack of research on the part of library school faculty members is the feeling that research is not valued by the field and will not be utilized.

The profession often seems more eager to have faculty members attend conferences, run for association offices, and organize yet one more workshop than to engage in research. These activities are important, but they can be dangerous in that they offer an instant appreciation and feedback that may entice people away from the slow, lonely process of research. In the long run the library profession, like any other, will get more of what it seems to value most. Librarians must be sure that rewards are allocated for activities that are most important for the profession.

Despite these difficulties, the surest way to build up a research foundation for librarianship, which will enable us to measure and evaluate services in a useful way, is to make use of the facilities available in library schools. With the growth of doctoral studies programs, there is in addition to faculty members a group of students engaged in learning about and carrying out research. While doctoral dissertations cannot be developed merely to supply the answer to a question puzzling some library, these dissertations should offer to the field research findings that will gradually build up a core of usable knowledge. Professional associations might offer more encouragement to doctoral students by occasionally inviting them to talk about their research and discuss its implications for libraries. This kind of contact would be useful for both students and practitioners.

Library schools need to make research available in easy-to-find form. Doctoral research should be published not only as a complete dissertation—often available only

on microfilm—but also written up as one or more journal articles, which are more widely distributed and easier to read.

If faculty members at library schools are to fulfill the two obligations of using research in their teaching and of working to develop a body of research for the future, they must coordinate their efforts with practitioners in the field. The report of the children's coordinators mentioned earlier spoke of setting up a continuing dialogue between coordinators and chief librarians. If this dialogue is to be effective, it should include library schools. Only by bringing together all sectors of the profession, each playing an appropriate role, will we be able to overcome the difficulties of measuring and evaluating children's services and be able to develop reasonable goals and objectives for service to children.

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Evaluating Children's Services

Diana Young

Reprinted from *Public Libraries*, Spring 1984, p. 20-22.

When was the last time you stepped outside the children's department and really looked, as an outsider, at the children's room, the materials collection, and the services offered to children by the library? Is the library meeting current needs? Expectations? Are there more or fewer children using the library than two years ago? Why? Is usage of library materials increasing or decreasing? Why?

Evaluation means looking at children's library services and determining how best to meet library goals and objectives. It means reviewing your library's community analysis and reexamining your short- (and long-) range plans. It means determining strengths as well as areas that require change. The following suggests points for consideration in the evaluation of children's services.

Facilities

The first thing a patron sees is the facility. If the client enters a noisy, messy area or an overly neat, silent one an attitude about the library and its staff is formed. In order to determine the condition of your library's children's area, you will need to step out of your role as librarian and assume the role of patron. Consider these points:

- **What is your initial impression of the area?** Is the area "receptive," or must you take into account factors only a librarian would understand? Is the condition and arrangement of the area physically inviting? Easily supervised? Does the area exhibit a caring child awareness and concern?

- **Is the area inviting to children?** Are shelving, bulletin boards, display cases, stools, and other furnishings suitable for a child physically? On a child's eye level? Are fresh, suitable colors used throughout the area? Are there bright posters,

mobiles, or other child–enticing displays to draw the child into the room? Does the room suggest the library purpose—playground, study hall, informality?

- **Is the area carpeted?** Or is there a rug in the picture–book area to cut down on noise and encourage children to sit on the floor? To enjoy the library?

- **Is the area inviting to parents?** Will parents want to bring their children into the area for a first visit? Are there welcoming displays of materials? Are there stools for pregnant mothers to sit on while helping preschoolers? Are children allowed to be children? Is the librarian in control of the area or are the children? Are unattended older children using the area designated for young children? Are unattended young children allowed to wander and disturb older children?

- **Is the room safe?** Are unused outlets covered? Are unsupervised audiovisual materials well out of the reach of preschoolers? Will the furniture tip over if a young child stands on it? Can paperback or magazine racks, display cases, or pet cages be easily pulled over? Are the aisles crowded? Are small objects kept out of the reach of young children? Are unattended children left unsupervised in the room? Are adults wandering throughout the area without reason or purpose?

- **Is the room orderly?** Are display materials, bulletin–board materials, and other little–used things stored out of sight? Are the materials neatly arranged (not in a strict, uninviting, everything–in–its–place order, but neatly, considering child–use order)? Are materials shelved daily, or must patrons plow through stacks of unshelved materials? Are puzzles and other toys picked up daily?

- **Is the librarian positioned in an accessible place?** Does placement of the service desk encourage questions and suggest a willingness on the part of the librarian to assist?

- **Is the area suitable for use by handicapped children and/or parents?** Is there space for a wheelchair between the shelves? In the reading area?

There are many other points to consider. Take time to make a list of the area's

strengths and weaknesses. Make a plan of action and follow it. Many times the task will seem overwhelming, but if a reasonable plan of action with accomplishable goals is set and followed, the task is not so great. Sometimes a minor change will make a big difference in the welcome exhibited by the room and staff.

Materials Collection

When and how a patron determines library needs can be directly attributable to the condition of the collection. It matters not whether the materials are available if the condition of the collection suggests that the materials are undesirable. Weeding is an important part of maximizing circulation, and its neglect can quickly lead to circulation loss. Some points to consider in examining the condition of the collection are as follows:

- **What is the physical condition of the collection?** Are there worn–out materials on the shelf? Are any materials dirty? Do they have torn pages, multiple crayon marks, broken bindings, missing pieces, scratches, or other broken parts? Would a child be frustrated by checking out a book, puzzle, record, tape, or film that doesn't work properly?

- **What is the currency of the collection?** Are the reference materials up–to–date? The nonfiction materials relevant? Are current topics covered in fiction materials? Are new materials on a wide range of topics added regularly? Are old favorites regularly replaced?

- **Is the collection filled with unneeded "gift" materials?** Are gift materials treated with the same care and concern as purchased materials? Are they retained because they are "gifts"?

- **Are materials available to children?** Are children's materials located in an area that gives children priority? Are materials within easy reach of their intended audience? Are materials for young children on three–foot high shelves or in low bins? Are materials for older children on sixty–inch (or sixty–six–inch) shelves? Are records in low bins? Are paperback and magazine racks at a child's eye level?

Services

Promised services need to be delivered. It does not help the library's image to offer and promote services that cannot be provided. Sometimes the library must reexamine services to determine which ones meet library goals and objectives and which ones unnecessarily consume staff time. This is perhaps the most difficult point of self–examination. It touches sensitive areas and programs that often provoke disagreement between children's librarians and the library director. Planning and awareness ensure that points of compromise enable the staff to continue to meet the library needs of children. To determine the best service possible, it will be necessary to examine the services already offered to children by other agencies in the community and to determine the best method to meet children's library needs. **Services** for the purpose of this article is defined as programming—for the library as a whole, for the main library, for branch libraries—and as outreach.

Programming

LIBRARY AS A WHOLE

- **What services are currently offered to children?** Are they successful? Are they meeting children's needs? Are there other agencies offering these services? Are they better funded? Better staffed? Better able to meet the needs of the children being served?

- **Are all the community's children being served?** How many children are there in the community? Which children don't have access to existing services? Whose role is it to provide service to children not being served? How can the neglect of these children be remedied?

- **What is the library's mission?** What services could the library best offer children? What is the goal of public library service to children? What objectives are in place to meet the goal? Should the goal be reevaluated? Should the objectives be reevaluated? Should the goal be changed? Should the objectives be changed to better support the goal?

- **What services can only be offered by the public library?** How are those services being addressed? Does the public library need to address them?

- **What patron input has been provided for in planning?** How can patrons participate in the library's planning for children?

MAIN LIBRARY

- **What services can best be offered by the main library?** Who does the main library serve? How many children have easy access to the main library? Who are these children? What are their needs? Does the main library serve mostly parents who pick up school assignments and their children's leisure materials? Which objectives that support the overall goal for library services are best met at the main library? What is the main library's goal for library service to children? What are its objectives?

BRANCHES

- **What services are offered by the branches?** Should each branch be individually considered? What is the client makeup for each branch? Does it vary from branch to branch? What is the socioeconomic status of the client area? How many children are in the client area? What are the children's library–service needs? Can children visit the library without the aid of their parents? Can the objectives for one branch be different from another? How do the branch objectives fit into the overall library goals? What is the branch goal for library service to children?

OUTREACH

- **What children's library services are currently being offered through outreach programs?** Have the goals and objectives for outreach service to children been reevaluated when new branches were added to the system? Which outreach goals are still viable? Which are now best met by the new branch? How does the current service meet the overall goal? Should the goals and objectives be reevaluated? Is the outreach service a tangible part of the system's total plan for children's service?

The staff of every library system should take stock from time to time of who they are, where they are headed, and the best way to get there. With the fast pace today and the press of vocal demands for service, many librarians find little time for self examination. Yet, this is perhaps the single, best way to ensure that there will always be library services for children. If children's librarians don't stop long enough to evaluate children's services, who will? The library director? The county commissioner? The library board? Or a disgruntled patron who will bring about swift and often ill-conceived changes? How much better library services for children will be if they are planned for and regularly evaluated. Stop today and look as an outsider at your library's children's area.

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What is Good Children's Library Service—How Can You Tell?

Adapted from a speech by **Karen J. Krueger**

We had gorgeous weather in Madison this weekend and for the first time this year I was able to get out in the yard, dig around in the dirt, and get some plants planted. What I was waiting for all winter finally happened. Gardening is important to me and, as I finished the weekend, I decided I would begin my presentation today by talking about gardening. To throw everyone off balance just a little bit more, I decided to also begin by telling a story, which is really dangerous in a group of people who specialize in service to children and young people. Nonetheless, I am going to tell a story about gardening.

This particular story is about a young woman who had lived in apartments for years and years and one day decided she was going to buy a house. After careful searching she bought a nice house in a suburban neighborhood. The house was situated on a wonderful lot, large but with not too many trees or interesting plantings. She wanted to have a beautiful yard so she hired a landscape architect. The landscape architect was recommended by friends and neighbors. The result was a complete landscape design. The plan was impressive. It was all drawn to scale and looked very professional, like something out of *House Beautiful*.

She took that plan and spent years trying to put it into place. Every year she did a little bit more so that, while she could not do it all at once, over a period of years she accomplished a great deal. The results were spectacular; she had a beautiful yard. It was the talk of the neighborhood. People exclaimed over what she had created. Like a house decorated with thousands of Christmas lights, her house attracted Sunday drivers, gawking at the profusion of color and variety of flowers. She found that she was very proud of this accomplishment. The many compliments she received made her feel good.

In addition she won an Orchid Award from the Chamber of Commerce for her beautifully landscaped yard. There was a photo in the newspaper. As part of the story, the reporter asked her to define good landscaping. She responded by repeating what she had read about landscaping and by repeating what other people had said to her about her yard. When the story appeared in the paper, she read and re-read it—somehow it didn't seem right. She puzzled off and on about this for weeks. Much to her chagrin, she eventually decided it was a failure; it wasn't good landscaping at all. The reason—it wasn't what she wanted! She had not articulated to the landscape architect what she had in mind (hadn't actually articulated it to herself, for that matter). The landscape architect, like some library consultants, had his own agenda and proposed what he thought was important, what he thought should be included in the plan. It wasn't that the person she hired wasn't talented—he was wonderful! But he came in and designed a plan that had all the right elements but was for the wrong client. The plan did not accomplish what was important to her.

What was her yard like? It had lots of roses and hundreds of bulbs (many were semi-hardy). It was a showplace for dahlias, and included a number of fruit trees, edible berries, an herb garden, and a cutting garden with exotic varieties of flowers. A well-landscaped yard, by contrast, would not have included roses, semi-hardy bulbs, or fruit trees. It would have included a variety of plants that once were in the ground did not have to be dealt with for many years, did not need to be pruned, sprayed, or pampered.

In other words she wanted landscaping that required low maintenance. She also would have preferred shrubs and other plants which attracted birds. There were many things that she wanted that she did not get, and things she got she did not want. How would she have known this? How would she have articulated this and decided what it was she wanted before the plan was put on paper and she began implementing it?

She would have done a needs assessment—assessing her own needs. What would she have observed?

She is a teacher; she makes a modest amount of money. She has her summers off and loves to travel. She likes birds. She is very active in the community (little theater, AAUW, Friends of the Library, her church, etc.) She has lots of hobbies, very little time. She is single, not fond of cooking. Convenience is important to her.

In comparing what she wanted versus what she got, we observe that although she did not want to spend a lot of time in the yard, in actuality she spent weekends and many evenings pruning, weeding, spraying, digging up and replanting bulbs, etc. Although she wanted to spend a modest amount of money, when all the costs were added up for her grand plan she actually spent over $5,000. As a result, for three summers in a row, she did no traveling because she was paying for her landscaping. Although she preferred to spend as little time in the kitchen as possible, her Protestant work ethic compelled her to put the bounty from her garden to good use. As a result she spent a great deal of time canning and freezing, and trying to use the many herbs she now had available.

Because she wasn't clear about what she wanted to accomplish—what her ends were—she got something entirely different. Evaluation was useless because she was not clear about her objectives. When she tried to evaluate, she did so on the wrong criteria—what other people thought, the award she received, textbook descriptions of the ideal landscape, etc.

With the conclusion of this story, I believe I have told you most of what I know about evaluation. It sums up how people make mistakes in evaluation because they focus so much on the information they get back. Librarians get feedback from many different sources: we conduct surveys, collect data, hear people's comments, have all kinds of information coming back to us about what we do. What we do not do is articulate what it is we want to accomplish so that the feedback and the information that keeps pouring in makes some sense and we have a context within which to place it.

The title of this talk is "What is Good Children's Services—How Can You Tell?" There are some definite links from my landscaping story to children's services.

Assuming I know, as a library director, what my library wants to accomplish, how do I get information which will tell me if we have done what we said we wanted to? There are a number of ways. Observation is certainly the easiest. I can walk through the library and I can listen to people when I am outside the library. I can observe many things. In the library, smiling faces, numbers of people, attractiveness of the children's department, are all important. Outside the library I hear comments—both solicited and not—from people willing to tell me what they think of the library. Because we have a computer catalog gone bad, people usually tell me they don't think a lot of the library these days. These comments are very helpful: the number of suggestions we get in the suggestion box, any letters to the editor of the local newspaper (we had four regarding our policy on not admitting children to the puppet plays after the show started.) I can look at the noise level in the children's department; the higher the noise level, the better. Well, perhaps. Other criteria for evaluation might be how quickly the carpet wears out in the children's department compared to the other departments, how often there are empty chairs, or whether there are ever time periods when the microcomputers are not being used. Observation is very easy, it is cheap (usually), and it does give you information to help you make some evaluation decisions.

Direct feedback from users is certainly important to look at. We did a user survey last year and we are in the process of doing a citizen survey. I have worked with libraries which have done student surveys, and they can also be very helpful. Getting this direct feedback is somewhat time-consuming, can be costly, and takes a lot of planning and careful construction of the survey instruments. But it is very rewarding.

Comparison with other libraries is another evaluation method, and this is one I think has to be done very carefully. The Public Library Association has begun to assist in this area through the Public Library Data Service (PLDS). The PLDS is part of the Public Library Development Program—in addition to the planning and role setting process and output measures. PLDS is a beginning, albeit very modest. There is nothing in the PLDS about children's services, for instance. But current comparative data is a step in the right direction. Wisconsin has something called the Wisconsin Library Service Record and I am sure other states have similar publications. These statistical type reports allow you to look at what other libraries are doing. I do urge caution, however, because we should not be be competing with other libraries; comparative data

can put your services and performance in context, and perhaps alert you to your library's strengths and weaknesses.

The most common source of information to help with evaluation is data, both input and output measures, on our own library. Ideally these data have been collected in the same way over a period of time. Data such as the number of volumes we own, the amount of money we spend on children's materials, number of staff, etc. Within our children's materials budget, how much are we spending on picture books, board books, toys, microcomputer software, and other types of materials. How has that changed over the years? How has staffing changed, especially in comparison to circulation, number of programs, etc.? Output measures such as circulation per juvenile capita, turnover of different areas of the children's collection (such as picture books, easy readers, and board books), the number of programs per juvenile capita, the amount of use our children's microcomputers receive, the amount of penetration we have made into the community. Usually we have lots of statistics available, a lot of data that can be used for evaluation purposes. The challenge is to have the right data and to use it wisely.

What I find frustrating is the difficulty of distinguishing statistics and data as methods of evaluation distinct from the evaluation itself. Data assist in the evaluation, but by themselves, those observations, those surveys, those numbers tell you nothing. If I know that our circulation per juvenile capita is 8.5 and I look at other libraries and I see that the median for most other libraries our size is 6.2, I could conclude that we are doing great. That is the wrong approach. The number itself describes our performance. It doesn't tell me anything unless I know what number it is I want to reach. What is the target?

Like the teacher with the elaborate landscaping, we need to know what we want. What do we want our circulation per juvenile capita to be? Do we want it to just keep going up? Do we want it to always be better than the neighboring library? Not necessarily. I think that the key—and I will say this over and over again—is being very clear about what it is you want to accomplish.

I guess the next obvious issue is how to set the targets, how to know what those targets ought to be? I will use targets and objectives interchangeably. Deciding on an appropriate target does not sound like it should be too difficult, but I find that it is. It's challenging and complicated.

In the past, what we have done to help us set those targets is to rely on standards. Somebody else, like the landscape architect, set the targets and decided what libraries were going to accomplish. In preparation for this talk I dug out the old 1966 national standards and thought it would be fun to look back to see what some of those targets were that were set for us. Here's one: at least 5% of a library's annual additions should be materials of specific interest to young adults. Another: the proportion of juvenile holdings in the total system should be a minimum of 25% to a maximum of 40%; no more than 1/2 of these should be new titles. In general 2/3 of the annual additions for children should be replacements or duplicate copies of older works. Even the largest systems should not exceed 1,000 - 1,200 new titles annually.

Working with these targets, set for us, was very easy. We collected the data and asked ourselves how many new titles we added to the collection the previous year. If we met the standard we could feel good that we were doing a good job. It was very clear cut. That is one of the reasons librarians like standards. There is much less ambiguity than exists in planning. But much less relevance as well. What is important is planning and evaluating in your setting for your library with your clientele.

How do we pick targets? What I am going to tell you today is what I know about this topic. I hope that when I finish you will add to that knowledge base and tell me what you know, so that I can go back and do a better job when I have to do it the next time. Selection of targets generally occurs midway through the planning process—you have done your looking around and your needs assessment; you have a mission statement that doesn't say you are going to be the "Center for the Life of the Mind"; you have looked at roles; you have articulated what your priorities are, and you have goals. You are trying to articulate a specific target, a specific objective that is measurable, that says exactly what it is you want to accomplish. You know what the area is, but you are not sure what the specific target should be.

To be perfectly honest, the way we have done it most often is to pick a number (if it is a quantitative measure) that feels right. I was glad for the definition of planning as "successive approximations to a moving target" (Robbins and Zweizig), because that is exactly how we feel all the time. We aren't sure, we don't know, we have a hint, we have talked with people, we have looked around, we look at what else we have to do, and we say, well, how does 60% sound?

To help arrive at a number we look at our state data (ours does not include children's services information, however) and at neighboring libraries. We call them up or talk to them at workshops and conferences and ask lots of questions. We have to be realistic about the community we serve and to set a target that is realistic given our community. It may be different than the community next door so we do not try to pick the same target. I review the reality of our own situation in terms of budget, how much money we have to work with, the staff we have on board, their skills and capabilities. All of those things enter into the realism factor when we pick a target. Also I look at the combination of roles we have chosen. We are a Formal Education Support Center, a Popular Materials Library, a Reference Library, and a Preschoolers' Door to Learning. As a result we find it more difficult to select targets as high as we would like in some areas. Doing three or more roles well will always be more difficult than doing one role well. I also look at past performance, at trends—how have things changed over a five year period?

All of these data and bits of information enhance and facilitate the selection of a target—a target that feels right to you and the staff. Perhaps in the discussion period some of you can share how you select targets, but that is in essence how we have done it at the Janesville library.

I thought next I would give you some examples of decisions we made at my library regarding targets. We did choose as two of our roles, Preschoolers' Door to Learning and Formal Education Support Center. Both are secondary roles for us. We have a goal that says the library promotes and encourages reading and reading readiness skills among preschool children in the Janesville service area. We wanted one of our objectives to include market penetration, in other words, the number of preschoolers we reach. We do

not know at present the extent of our success, or put another way, the extent of our failure. We were concerned that we were reaching too few. We have a very active children's program, but we know that our storyhours, even when offered three times, reach relatively few children. Other programming, such as puppet shows, and Mother Goose programs, are only able to reach a limited audience. We estimate we have about 5,000 preschoolers in our service area. The question for us was, what is the target? What percentage of the preschool population do we want to be able to reach?

We had no comparisons with other libraries. We had no current data and no past data. We took into account the fact that Janesville is a blue collar community, home to a large General Motors plant. In most families, both mother and father work outside the home and do not have much spare time. Many may not be readers. We thought it would be harder for us to reach a high target in this particular objective than for a community like Madison which is highly educated and very aware of the importance of reading. Nonetheless, since we did not know current performance we asked ourselves what we would like to aspire to. We chose a target of 75%. Of course, one of the very first things we need to do is find out what percentage of preschool population we are currently reaching. [Author's note: Since this talk was given, the results of our citizen survey have been compiled. According to our definition of reach, which is that a preschooler has visited a public library in the past year, we "reach" 71% of the preschool population in the City of Janesville.]

Another goal at my library is to offer young people ages 12 to 17 a variety of programs and services designed for their developing needs and interests. As part of that goal we have an objective to produce a 75% author and title fill rate for young adults. How did we choose that? In this case we looked at our adult figures because we do have figures for the adult population. We decided we could not achieve the same performance as we achieve with adults because we have provided very few services to teenagers over the years. Our collection is small and we devote only five hours a week of staff time to young adult services (now being increased annually by five hours a week). As a result of this comparison with our adult author and title fill rate, we scaled down our young adult target because of what we perceived to be reality. Over a period of time we will keep setting that target higher as we see what we are able to achieve.

The last example target I will share with you is that we hoped to reach 60% of the 12-17 age population with library service for personal as well as school related purposes. We know that we get lots of teenagers in the library; our user survey showed that, and we can observe it. But we want to be sure we are reaching these teens for their personal needs as well as school related needs. We do not want them to just come in, do their homework, and leave. In terms of setting the target for this, we knew that since we were emphasizing the formal education support center role we would be initiating a lot of contacts with the schools, and would have ample opportunities to entice middle and high school students with other services not related to coursework. We believed we had a good chance of performing higher in meeting young adult's personal needs than a library might if formal education support center was not one of their chosen roles. However, we also knew that with only five hours a week of a young adult librarian's time, this was also going to be a challenge. [Author's note: Our recent citizen survey showed that in the past year, 74% of the 12 to 17 year–olds in Janesville used the library for personal as well as school related use.]

A question we keep asking ourselves in setting targets is whether the target should reflect what the ultimate end result should be or what is realistic? Since objectives are to be achievable, I believe it is better to set them high enough to be challenging but low enough to be reachable. The next planning cycle we can always set the target a bit higher. Eventually we will get where we want to be.

The step after choosing targets or selecting measurable objectives is identifying how you are going to accomplish your objectives. Objectives are the ends we want to achieve, strategies are the means. Earlier this morning, Doug Zweizig referred to the importance of coming up with a list of alternative activities which you could evaluate, and from which you could choose those most effective in meeting your target. Developing such a list allows a library to explore many options and objectively select some. For the objective to reach 75% of the preschool population, most of our strategies involve publicity. We have a brochure called "Catch 'em in the Cradle" based on the ALA program, which has been very effective. We had wonderful response to that. We gave it out to all new parents at the hospital, and we found that people would come into the library with it in–hand asking for some of the materials listed. One of our strategies is

to make sure that the brochure gets an even wider distribution through doctor's offices, daycare centers, etc. We listed a variety of such strategies, and chose those we thought would best get us where we wanted to go.

To try to pull all this together, a bit, I want to refer back to the title of my talk, "What is good children's library service and how can you tell?" I believe the existence of a plan, with goals and measurable objectives (in other words a clear understanding of what you want to accomplish), if implemented and monitored, can tell a library if it has good children's services. However this is only part of the picture. Most libraries, like Janesville Public Library, will have a limited number of goals and objectives which cover the whole realm of library service, from homebound service and reference to fundraising. It certainly does not include everything we do. The plan includes targets that stretch us, that will result in more or better service for the community. It includes areas that need improvement, that we want to focus on. But these targets are only a portion of what the Janesville library does.

The many things that we do that are not in the plan we keep track of by listing them on an inventory of services. We designed the list around the roles, with services and materials listed under their appropriate role, even roles we have not selected. It is helpful to review this list periodically. Our Board and staff looked at each item on the list and made a conscious decision whether to maintain the status quo, increase, or decrease our efforts, or eliminate the service entirely. Evaluation of these services is much less formal than what we go through with our objectives. If we want to maintain our present number of volunteer microcomputer helpers, we can easily monitor that. If we want to gradually eliminate our filmstrip collection and build a children's video collection, that also is easily monitored. This inventory, or operational work-plan, provides informal targets. Combined with the more structured, higher impact targets in the library's plan, these provide the basis upon which we can determine what good children's library service is.

It is essential in my library, and I believe in all libraries, that we know where we are going and that staff and Board have a common vision. During a discussion earlier this morning there was some talk about the possibility of initiating planning in the children's department when it is not being done elsewhere in the library. It occurs to me

that if my reference department had done this, developed plans and objectives they wanted to accomplish, it is likely their vision and mine would not be the same. As an administrator I believe that anytime planning and evaluation goes on within a children's department, it should only be with the support and common understanding of the administration. It is essential the children's department have the same vision as the organization as a whole. Resources are always scarce, whether they are human or financial. Tradeoffs are always made. A department planning by itself is not forced to consider these tradeoffs. It does little good to develop plans that cannot be accomplished or that require sacrifices elsewhere in the institution which the administration or Board are not willing to make. The Children's Department, like the Reference Department, is part of a larger organization and cannot function independently when planning is involved.

From my point of view, good library service has to begin with a common vision shared by staff and Board. I don't think there is a formula we can use; there are too many things that enter into the equation. Following up that common vision with lofty goals (I say that in all sincerity) and specific measurable targets is essential before you can begin to evaluate the kind of children's services you are providing.

Evaluation of Children's Services

Mary K. Chelton

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss program evaluation concepts and methods, with specific attention to the ways in which they can be applied to children's services. The special developmental, demographic, and political factors that may enhance or inhibit the use of program evaluation by librarians serving children will also be addressed, and examples of program evaluation instruments now used in several libraries will be appended for consideration, replication, or adaptation by interested readers.

The article is not intended to be a comprehensive overview but rather a clear basic delineation and defense of the process with resources noted for further self–study. In fact, an attitude of self–study is intrinsic to the entire concept of evaluation; without it, most techniques are useless. To be an evaluator, one must care enough about what one does to subject it to careful scrutiny without resentment. Since many children's librarians are already resentful about doing important work for little money, status, or recognition, evaluation may be automatically suspect. The article is based on the premise that children's services are too important not to be evaluated!

There are some important differences between the concept presented in this article and traditional concepts of evaluation in public libraries. Until the last fifteen years, evaluation of library services consisted almost exclusively of measuring oneself against national or state standards. These standards were highly prescriptive in terms of the number and qualifications of staff, materials, and square footage. They were generally

derived from peer-accepted "best practice" in existing libraries, with some political compromises to make them reasonably attainable by most libraries.[1]

The problem with these prescriptive standards, beyond their obviously self-serving nature, became apparent in the 1960s when a group of researchers from the Rutgers library school began looking at the differences among the "outputs" of similar libraries, all of which met the prescriptive "inputs." They quickly found that putting standard resources (i.e., staff, materials, space, etc.) into a library did not necessarily assure that standard activities (i.e., circulation per capita, percentage of reference questions filled per questions asked, program attendance per capita, etc.) would come out of it. Thus the conceptualization of prior library standards was shown to be faulty, and the profession then started to look critically not only at what different libraries were doing with different resources but also at whether the libraries should adhere to any external prescriptive standards unrelated to local institutional objectives at all.[2]

To say that the idea of prescriptive standards died hard among children's librarians—especially in the public library—is a vast understatement evidenced by their continued publication in the mid-1980s.[3] Why such resistance continues is open to conjecture, although in fairness it is not all inclusive. In 1985, a formal feasibility test of the Public Library Association's (PLA) Output Measures methodology was conducted with a group of Wisconsin's children's librarians,[4] and a program on output measures was held at the ALA annual conference by the PLA Library Service to Children Committee.

While the techniques described in this article may extend those measures promulgated by PLA and since they are not aimed at a strictly juvenile population, the bias of the author is definitely toward the means by which local children's services can be shown to be effective, rather than toward the degree to which they meet externally imposed prescriptions that may have nothing to do with local history, resources, or needs.

Evaluation—What It Is Not

Since there is a pervasive tendency among youth-serving librarians to perceive evaluation as either an attack by a hostile administrator, or a once-and-for-all measure of ultimate worth, the following statements are designed to dispel mythology about what evaluation is or is not.

(1) *Evaluation is not the way by which one's ultimate worth is measured.* In fact, for one seeking assurance of ultimate worth, evaluation should probably be avoided for mental health. That evaluation can be a distinctly threatening activity is quite clearly delineated by Chelimsky:

> Wildavsky points out that "If you don't know how to make an evaluation, it may be a problem for you but not for anyone else. If you do know how to evaluate, it becomes a problem for others." In fact, a major problem in the use of evaluation has been the threat it poses.... First, an evaluation report is public information which, once generated, cannot be kept secret or limited to the private use of the decision-maker. Thus, it provides persons other than the responsible decision-maker with information which may adversely affect that decision-maker. Second, it is a force for change. It seeks ways to improve an existing set of activities, no matter what the purpose of the evaluation... improvement always involves change, rather than the status quo, and change can appear threatening. As James Abert has put it: "The setting of program objectives and the choosing of evaluations are in themselves very emotional undertakings. Program managers generally are not anxious to do it. In fact, trust, confidence, honor, and many of the more noble aspects of life seem to be strongly challenged by evaluation."[5]

(2) *Evaluation is not always complicated.* An example of a deceptively simple evaluation, easily adaptable to children's services, is the Lodestar project carried out by the Patrick Henry Branch of the Fairfax County (Virginia) Public Library in spring 1985. After determining that young adults were an underserved market, the librarians designed a program series with a specific logo (the Lodestar) targeted to the adolescent age group that culminated in a contest to win a star which would then be named for the contest winner. Promotion of the series involved speaking to all the English teachers in local schools and distributing tickets through them to their students for the contest. To actually enter, however, the young adults had to drop off their tickets at the library. Thus, the objective of raising awareness of the library among an underserved group was

evaluated (measured) by the number of entries returned divided by the number of entry tickets given out. This process could easily be adapted to measure summer reading club promotion in specifically targeted schools.

Admittedly, this evaluation only measured the effectiveness of the promotion, not the return visits of those introduced to the library this way nor the proportion of young adults for whom this was a first visit, but it was appropriate for what it did, and it was simple. Many librarians promote their programs in a total vacuum; however, in Fairfax County they decided how the program would be measured at the same time that they planned the program.

Another example of a deceptively simple evaluation comes from the Wolfsohn Public Library in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania (see appendix A). When the children's librarians there initiated a toddler story hour, they adapted a one-page evaluation form which asked parents of participating toddlers not only to observe their children at and between story hours to record their impressions of the process of the program, but also to observe the program's impact on their toddlers over time.[6] This is a more sophisticated method because it involves nonlibrary staff, requires voluntary cooperation, and measures more than one aspect; it is, however, simple.

(3) *Evaluation will not always prove what you want it to.* A prime example of this was a feasibility study conducted in 1985 by the author of taping in-house picture-book storytime programs for rebroadcast on cable television. The study consisted of taking a sample of titles in present use by staff in Virginia Beach (Virginia) Public Libraries, mailing request letters for permission to broadcast to the publishers of these titles on a particular day, and then tracking the response time and the percentage of positive responses to determine whether one could do such a program and how long it would take to organize it. Since there was a significant amount of anecdotal evidence that the publisher did not always hold the copyright and that repeat mailings might be necessary, the rate of such repeat mailings was also noted.[7] The results indicated in table 1 show that, for this series at least, it was possible not only to receive enough free broadcast permissions to have a viable program series, but also that the program could be set up within a four-month period.

One would have to replicate this process successively with different samples of titles and study the differences among the results before deciding whether these permission and response rates held true in general or just for this particular sample. In this instance, though, an evaluative study disproved the previously held belief that copyright clearance presented a serious hurdle to planning such a program.

TABLE 1

Cable Storytime Feasibility Study

(see appendix B for specific titles)

Number of Titles: 42

Inquiries to Publishers		*Response from Publishers*	
Initial letters	24	Initial responses	18
Additional	6	Additional	4
Total	30	Total	22
			(73% of Publishers)
Turnaround Time		Fees	
One month	8	Free (1 time only)	9
Two months	8	Free (3 times only)	5
Three months	6	Free (unlimited)	8
Total	22	Total free	22 (52% titles)
		Fee required	3 (7% titles)
		Range: $25 - $500	

(4) *Evaluation is not always quantitative (i.e., counting things) even when the results are presented and analyzed numerically.* The cable storytime study offers a good example of this concept. The actual method involved sending the same letter to twenty-four publishers on the same day and then tracking the responses to see what patterns emerged. The Center for Early Adolescence evaluated client satisfaction with after school programs by asking the young adolescent participants a structured series of

forced–choice and open–ended questions. The process was systematic and evaluative because they asked the same questions of participants at different sites thereby establishing a basis of comparison (see appendix C).

Reference services to adults have been evaluated by means of the proxy patron method whereby a proxy patron asks a real reference question to see not only if one gets an answer but also what kind of answer.[8] This method could be used by children's librarians to evaluate reference service to older children and/or young adolescents. It is a more useful method than the "reference fill rate" of Output Measures because the quality of the answer can be studied as well as the interpersonal climate within which the answer was given. Unfortunately, this method is more difficult to administer than the simpler fill rate.

(5) *Evaluation does not solve problems; it only provides the evidence needed to solve problems.* For example, an administrator who feels that a specialized children's services staff is inflexible and expensive, as opposed to generalists who, theoretically, can work equally well with all ages, may be given pause by a well–designed descriptive evaluation study which documents the number of adults served by the children's staff and the activities pursued by the children's staff when children are not in the library. The evidence from the study may not totally erase the bias, but it will possibly help point out that the problem is bias and not fact. The study might also prove that the director is correct about inflexibility and allow the children's staff to look at themselves objectively, based on facts rather than resentment. Evaluation is not without risk.

Evaluation—What It Is

Evaluation is the means by which a program, service, or activity is shown to have or have not worked or to examine what might work. It involves a systematic and explicit comparison of what actually occurred with what was planned. As a recent tutorial in *American Libraries* (October 1985 to February 1986) put it, evaluation asks the question, "Are we there yet?"[9] Other definitions include:

> ...the process of determining whether something is what you want it to be.[10]

...examining and weighing a phenomenon against some explicit or implicit yardstick.[11]

...an attempt to devise in some normal way a procedure for obtaining evidence or assessing how well a goal or objective...has been met.[12]

A systematic way to observe and describe what and how well you are doing to yourself and to others....[13]

Evaluation is an intrinsic part of program design. The methods by which progress will be measured must be part of the original conceptualization process. One cannot decide after the fact that it would be nice to know if a particular activity (e.g., nursery school visits) had a particular result (e.g., increased interest in books) if the method by which the result is measured (e.g., a survey of nursery school staff before and after the visit; circulation to those children/families/staff, etc.) is not built into the data-gathering process of the program at the outset. It is especially important to evaluate programs being done for the first time to establish a baseline. This simply means a record against which future efforts can be compared.

The intentions (objectives) of a program should be clearly stated and measurable because the presence or absence of such objectives determine not only whether a program can be evaluated or not but also what measurement is most appropriate. A good example is the ubiquitous summer reading club. If the stated objective is to encourage children to read over the summer, then the percentage increase in circulation of juvenile materials or the percentage increase in new juvenile card registrations during the summer months might be useful measures. If on the other hand the objective is to maintain reading skills over the summer, then such measures are imprecise. A better measure would be before and after assessments of reading test scores, comparing similar children who did and did not participate in the summer reading club. Ironically, in the evaluation of most summer reading programs, the second objective is intended, but it is measured by the first set of measures, or worse, only by documentation of increased or decreased participation rates without any attention to the percentage of repeaters (i.e., the effect of repeated participation) among those participating.

An evaluation is done through a series of observations which simply means "any method used to gather data."[14] Frequently the observation method is of necessity some type of survey. An entire body of knowledge is available about survey research. One of the best overviews of the subject is an article by Barbara Moran in which she says:

> Taken step by step, survey research is relatively easy to do. Much help is available to beginning researchers from those already familiar with the method and from books on the topic. The first survey is the most difficult, but with careful planning, major errors can be avoided. Doing research is a lot like swimming; the only way to learn is to get in the water.[15]

Appropriate evaluation methods attempt to control for a variety of "threats" to their validity in attributing an effect to the program rather than to external forces outside the control of the program manager or to unintentional bias on his or her part. The possibility of a cumulative effect from repeated enrollment in the summer reading club program is an example of a factor an evaluator of that program should control for if by no other means than at least by documenting repeaters so they can be compared with first timers.

Levels of Evaluation

There are three distinct levels of evaluation, and it is important to understand the differences among them not only because they are intended to do different things, but also because the sophistication and resources needed to accomplish them increase with each level.

The first level is called a process evaluation. This level of evaluation measures the efficiency of the way in which a program is organized (i.e., the process of the program). In a process evaluation, the various elements of a program are reviewed, usually through descriptive recordkeeping. This review looks at the way in which the individual program elements are activated and relate to each other. A very good example of such an evaluation is the assessment done by the children's coordinator of the New Hanover County (North Carolina) Library. Using an instrument designed for the purpose (see appendix D), she isolated each component of the story hour process and rated the program giver who presented it. Besides assessing the quality of the program

by examining its process, this method is extremely useful for identifying gaps in staff training for this program.

Another kind of process evaluation which most children's librarians do intuitively is observing peak use times within the library and matching staff schedules accordingly. The actual documentation of these patterns has led in some libraries not only to more efficient staff scheduling, but also to better hours for the children's room itself. This kind of ongoing process evaluation, if well documented, can show not only changes over time but seasonal variations within the same time period.

Richard Windsor, an expert in evaluation research, comments that "the importance of specifying process evaluation procedures during the early states of program development and introduction cannot be overstressed."[16] The fact that this documentation of process was not initiated when children's services started in the late 19th century is no excuse not to start it now especially when a few on-site researchers have begun to describe it.[17]

The second level of evaluation is called program evaluation. This term is also used generically to mean all levels of evaluation, but in terms of the specific levels of evaluation its meaning is synonymous with impact or effectiveness. In contrast to merely documenting a process, this level of evaluation attempts to determine whether changes that have happened within a specific population at a specific location occurred because of the program. The Wolfsohn toddler storytime evaluation is an excellent example of a program evaluation design, because it attempts to determine the changes in behavior of the toddlers exposed to the Wolfsohn program.

Another example of a program, as opposed to a process evaluation, would be determining whether attitudes toward reading changed as a result of booktalks by the local children's librarian in a particular classroom or in a class visit to the public library. With the cooperation of the teacher and school librarian, it would be fairly easy to use a standard attitudinal measurement, such as those included in *Motivating Children and Young Adults to Read*,[18] to find out the attitudes of the students toward reading both before and after the booktalks. The evaluation design might be further

strengthened by assessing a similar group of children who did not hear booktalks and compare the before and after results of both groups. With a comparison group, the possibility that the pre–booktalk assessment influenced the post–booktalk one would be controlled for because both groups of similar children would have been exposed to the influence of the assessment but not the influence of the booktalks.

This is essentially the process followed by Joni Bodart, author of *Booktalk!*[19] and *Booktalk! 2*[20] in her dissertation research. One does not, however, need to do a dissertation to implement this kind of evaluation as long as school officials are cooperative.

Measuring a change in attitudes toward reading as a result of booktalks implies that this is the intended impact of the program. If another impact is intended—such as increased circulation by the children who heard the booktalk—another kind of observation method is required. A mere increase in the circulation of the titles used in the booktalk may be too imprecise because it would disguise the effects of peer interaction among children who were exposed to the booktalks and the friends with whom they talked who were not. If the intent of the booktalk program is to promote reading among children or to call attention to "sleepers," a circulation increase in the titles used in the booktalk would be an appropriate measure. In a program evaluation, the impact of the program and possible effects on it must be sorted out at the time the evaluation design and data gathering are being determined

A program evaluation attempts to ascertain the presence or absence of a variety of "threats" to the possible effectiveness of a program. Many of these problems can be controlled for by the program administrator from the beginning, or, if not controlled for, they can be examined retrospectively to explain a lack of impact unfairly ascribed to the program.

The most familiar threat is called *history* in evaluation jargon. This is the unexpected snowstorm that keeps an audience away on what otherwise seemed to be an ideal night for an evening holiday story hour, or the television movie that results in indifference to an outstanding booktalk. Essentially, history is any extraneous event

over which the program planner has little control and which interferes with the impact of the program. Of all the threats, history is the hardest to control but the easiest to explain after the fact. There is probably not a children's librarian working who has not already experienced it.

A second threat is called *maturation*, which means simply that the program is being evaluated while it is still immature enough that the "kinks" of immaturity (i.e., inexperienced staff or participants) are unduly influencing possible effectiveness. An example might be something as simple as a drop in attendance in the first weeks after a new librarian takes over a storytime program. This does not mean that the program is a failure, only that it needs an initial adjustment period. If the lowered attendance persists, however, it is more likely that something inherent in the program itself (i.e., the titles chosen, the length, or the librarian's skill) is a problem unless something has changed in the target community (e.g., massive layoffs among parents, a gasoline crisis or transportation strike, ethnic/socioeconomic shifts, etc.) The latter would be another example of history. The threats cannot be examined in isolation from one another, and in this case they may be interacting.

The third threat is called *testing*. This occurs when the means of observation —whether an interview, a survey, or an attitudinal assessment such as the one mentioned earlier in connection with booktalks—influences the reaction of the program participants. If children are asked about whether they like to read, then a librarian comes to talk to them about books to read, and they are then asked again whether they like to read, the children may well deduce that they should say "yes" to this person. Thus the second responses will be unduly influenced by being asked the question previously, and the librarian will never know the real effect of booktalks on reading attitudes, or worse, assume a vastly inflated role in changing them. The best way to control for this threat is by using a similar group, also exposed to the before and after influence of the observation method but not to the program. It is also important that the comparison group of children not be able to interact with the ones experiencing the booktalks, or the distinction of the two groups is lost as a basis of comparison.

A threat related to testing is called *instrumentation*. This means the degree to which the method of observation is valid and reliable. Reliability is the extent to which the same measure gives the same results on repeated application. The influence of instrumentation is shown in national polls on public policy issues—such as abortion—where the answers vary depending on how the question is phrased. The key to reliability is whether the particular phrasing is similarly interpreted by all the people responding. This problem is possibly exacerbated with children because of their varying levels of cognitive development even among children of the same age. When the method of observation is a test or survey, it is extremely important to try it out on as many children as possible—excluding the actual audience to be surveyed or tested—to make sure that they interpret the question in the same way. For very young children, these methods of observation are not appropriate.

Validity is the extent to which a criterion really measures what it says it does. A measure can be reliable without necessarily being valid. George D'Elia has pointed out, for example, that the output measures of materials availability, proposed by the Public Library Association, may really be measuring user behavior rather than materials availability and are invalid.[21] From a children's services perspective, all of the first-level output measures are invalid because they do not take the age structure of the population into account. Not only do they ignore the proportion of children in the population but also the proportion of adults in the child rearing years who might be using the library for their children. At this point the PLA's output measures obscure children's services more than reveal them. The validity of these measures will probably be debated in professional literature for some time, and children's librarians would be wise not to let the debate go on without them.

One of the ways in which one controls for the threat of instrumentation, besides scrupulous pretesting with members of the intended audience, is by inviting outside experts and/or peers to comment on the validity of the measures chosen to document a particular activity. There are also statistical methods to assess validity and reliability. An excellent discussion of all the issues involved in good instrumentation appears in the chapter on data gathering in *Research for Decision-Making*[22] as well as

in Windsor's book, and in the titles cited in Moran's article. These methods are outside the scope of the present article.

Another threat is called *regression*. This refers to a statistical phenomenon where by subjects chosen as an extreme example of any phenomenon will "regress" over time toward the average example of that phenomenon. Regression makes it impossible to tell whether the changed phenomenon was caused by the program or the types of people observed. The regression threat is related to another called *selection*. This refers to the group chosen for study and how representative they actually are of the entire population about whom the investigator might want to draw some conclusions. Selection also refers to characteristics of groups chosen for comparison with the group receiving the program. Selecting the wrong group of people in the first place, or the wrong group for comparison, can interfere with determining the impact of a program. The same references cited for an expanded study of instrumentation also include information on sampling and selection.

Even when the selection process has been sound, *attrition* can pose a threat. This refers to a significant loss of program participants and may give a clear signal that something is wrong with the program. Attrition can happen for a variety of reasons: the program was too long, the publicity was misleading, etc. Attrition, while dismaying, is very important, especially when those who drop out or leave a program differ markedly from those who stay. A common mistake is to overlook these differences and ascribe success to the program because a reasonable number of people stayed with it, especially when an examination of differences might reveal that the program was least successful with those it most intended to reach. Summer reading club attrition by age and sex begs for such an analysis.

While all the threats to program effectiveness can be discussed separately, they tend to interact in real situations. A thorough understanding of the individual threats to a program provides the necessary insight not only to make programs more responsive in the first place but also to analyze in a systematic way the program's actual effects.

There is a third level of evaluation called *evaluation research* which is usually beyond the resources and training of practitioners, but the results of this level of research should be known to them. Evaluation research is the process by which the theories underlying practitioner programs are scientifically tested. Bodart tested the hypothesis that booktalks improved the reading attitudes of adolescents.[23] Smardo looked at the effect of different types of story hour presentations on the receptive language of children.[24] Powell et al. investigated the relationship between certain childhood experiences and adult library use.[25] Heyns studied summer activity that influenced children's vocabulary scores.[26] Greene compared three different types of library-based early childhood centers.[27] Fasick and England compared media preferences between childhood users and nonusers of a Canadian public library.[28]

Unfortunately, most academic research related to children's services has focused on the contents of materials produced for children rather than the impact of library services on them. Benne indicated that measurement of children's services was a problem because of a lack of clearly defined goals,[29] and the author suspects that this problem carries over to the conceptualization of research. It is doubly important that the little research that has been done be familiar to practicing children's librarians so that they understand that their programs are based on sound theory rather than on tradition. Knowledge of evaluation research can enhance program justification and planning.

Politics of Evaluation

The fact that a program has clear measurable objectives, valid measures, and sufficient resources to document itself does not ensure a successful evaluation although all those factors must be present in order to do one. Evaluation serves more than one purpose within an organization. Besides providing evidence for decision-making—and possibly proving accountability to the public—an evaluation should also gain administrative support for solving the problems it reveals. Thus the ultimate success of an evaluation depends on "the skill of the evaluators in understanding the value systems present in the organization."[30] If the library does not have a capacity for self-criticism and change, an evaluation may only be an exercise in futility. Davis and

Salasin have proposed eight factors to examine and consider before beginning an evaluation process:

> Ability to undertake and use an evaluation in terms of monetary resources, available staff, and staff energy to mount both the study and for the implementation of resultant recommendations.
> Values held in the organization. Specifically, is the organization secure in its environment, open in its decision-making structure, willing to change, and is management able to accept criticism and act on it?... Information available or that can be procured to support the evaluation.
> Circumstances prevailing at the time of the evaluation. Elements examined include recent changes in programs, new or old leadership, state of client relationships, internal conflict, openness in the exchange of ideas and criticism.
> Timing of the evaluation should coincide with other activities or programs that might encourage change....
> Obligation to change. If there is dissatisfaction with the status quo, changes can occur more easily and naturally.
> Resistance to change is always present in the organization, and an understanding of its sources and strengths is critical for anyone evaluating the organization's programs.
> Yield. From the outset, there must be assurances by management that it considers the evaluation to be important, that the results of the evaluation will justify its costs, and that it expects to use the results to bring about desired changes.[31]

While these factors are intended to enlighten an outsider who comes in to evaluate an organization, they are equally important for an insider to consider. Just as a children's librarian might feel attacked if suddenly asked to evaluate his or her program, a library director will feel just as attacked by a good evaluation of a children's program that demands change on the part of management. There are political ramifications to "describing oneself to others" through a program evaluation, and they are ignored at one's peril. In many cases it may be necessary to postpone reporting the evaluation results until a change in management precipitates a change in organizational values.

Evaluation Problems Unique to Children's Services

Organizational Isolation

Most children's librarians positions are entry–level, which usually means that there are several hierarchical layers of authority between children's librarians and top management. The resources and support necessary not only to do, but to respond to the results of a program evaluation can be waylaid at any of the levels. This is particularly true in libraries converting to automation. If the children's librarian evaluates the use of the catalog by children and presents children's needs for multiple, popular subject access points before the implementation of automation, he or she may be particularly unwelcome to a branch librarian or children's coordinator who has received a clear message from the top that funding will never cover that level of quality in the system.

On the other hand, if in the course of a post–implementation evaluation the children's librarian points out problems, the middle manager may "kill" the message so as not to disturb the uneasy complaisance of the decision–maker, and the children's librarian will fall into disfavor for bringing bad news. Unless a library is particularly open to staff suggestions for change from entry–level people, a children's librarian would do well to analyze and cultivate the intervening administrative personnel to ensure their understanding and support before embarking on any serious evaluation which may ultimately demand something of them.

Geographical isolation is also a problem if the children's librarian is relegated exclusively to a children's room with little interaction with the rest of the staff.[32] Such an arrangement can literally make children's services invisible, and initial attempts to call them to someone else's attention may simply be interpreted as annoying self–promotion. Unfortunately, in the absence of complaints from the public, many adult services librarians and directors are as happy to have children's services (and children) remain invisible as children's librarians are to have the illusion of autonomy. This mutually self–serving isolation is not only shortsighted but also does not advance the cause of gaining institutional support for an evaluation or for the changes it may indicate are needed.

The Age Structure of the Population

Even though the sheer numbers of the "baby boomers" and their delayed fertility indicate a potential "boomlet" on the horizon, the overall proportion of children in the population is declining because the "boomers" are having far fewer children than their parents.[33] It is equally important to understand that the age structure of the various ethnic groups within an overall population may be very different not only from the total population but from each other because of different fertility rates. Thus, in a community with white, black, and Hispanic populations, the proportions of children in each group might be respectively 15 percent, 23 percent, and 30 percent. Since cultural and socio–economic factors influence library use, it would be illusory for a children's librarian to credit her program with success based on participation if all participants are white and the changing demographics of the target population are ignored. On the other hand, it may be difficult to gather support for the resources needed to deliver and evaluate services to minority children when an aging white population comprises the power structure that supports the library.

Age structure is also an important consideration in the use of PLA's level one output measures, since they are based solely on the total population. In a library that records 50 percent of its circulation from children's materials in a population consisting of only 25 percent children, an overall per capita measure totally blurs reality.

To get an accurate count of the juvenile population of a community and its proportion compared to other age groups, there are now some helpful tools besides the standard single–year breakdowns in the *General Characteristics of the Population* published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.[34] One of the most helpful is the Donnelly Demographics database available on DIALOG.[35] Donnelly's also publishes *Market Profile Analysis*[36] which lists the percentage of the youth population by census tract.

Developmental Level of the Children

It is somewhat difficult to ask a preschooler how or why he/she enjoyed a story hour program when the child has not yet developed either the thought processes or the language to answer. Also, children are in a power relationship with adults, and might easily just give answers which they feel please the adult rather than their actual

reaction. This means that children's librarians have to depend more on observational methods for evaluation rather than using methods—such as questionnaires—common with adult audiences who feel free to speak for themselves.

This is not an insurmountable problem and in fact could be considered a strength because of the necessity of observing behaviors as opposed to accepting verbalizations totally unrelated to behavior. The key to this problem is to find consistent, unobtrusive observers who can rate behavior which is unambiguously described, such as "The child sits quietly for ten minutes during storytime," or "The child listens attentively for at least five minutes." If the observers are well trained and the behaviors unambiguously described on an instrument that has been rigorously pretested, the lack of young children being able to speak for themselves does not present a great problem in evaluating programs for them. One of the means of ensuring a good evaluation of this type is to have the several observers rate the same child with the same instrument at the same time to rules out any effect of observer variation before the program actually begins. This particular check on observer variation can also be repeated at different times during the program. Given the need for these methods and the importance of the services to young children, it is frustrating that so few public library children's rooms do not incorporate two–way mirrors into the architecture.

Another technique that can be used with children comes from consumer marketing called *focus interviews*. In this method, a group is chosen and then asked specific structured questions by an adult facilitator. The entire process is videotaped for later analysis. This technique is useful with verbal children for whom reading or writing may still be a problem. The issue is to find an evaluation method which is appropriate, useful, and affordable, not just to copy a method more appropriate for adults or adolescents, or worse, to declare services to young children impossible to be evaluated.

Parental Involvement

While there may still be some children's librarians who regard parents as interlopers into their professional domain, it is hoped that most children's librarians welcome parental involvement in the process of introducing children to the reading experience. In terms of evaluation, parents can perform several invaluable functions.

They can give consent for their children to be observed or interviewed where necessary, and they can serve as observers themselves to document behavioral changes in their children as the result of library programs. Parents can also provide advice at the point at which an evaluation is being designed even to the point of helping to pretest instruments with their own children.

It is important, when involving parents in an evaluation, to make it clear to them that the existence of the program does not depend on the evaluation, or they may give biased responses. Unfortunately, the concept of evaluation as self-study rather than as proof of worth is as misunderstood by the general public as it is by librarians.

Working parents can be involved by mail or telephone, or the child's day-care provider or nursery school teacher might be called upon for help. Given the multiplicity of child care arrangements among working parents and the lack of credentials among providers,[37] this may be very frustrating, although to be pragmatic, these individuals may be the only adults actively involved with a particular child who can be called upon for help. The reality is that children do not control their own lives—the adults who care for them do—so the adults must be involved in evaluation efforts.

Seasonality

While it is appropriate to measure a discrete event or series at the time it takes place, it is not appropriate to measure ongoing services with significant seasonal variations only on an annual basis. Unfortunately, this approach is recommended in *Output Measures*. In services as distinctly seasonal as those to children, this process is meaningless. In fact, the Wisconsin feasibility study of using output measures alludes to this problem. While libraries hardly need to return to the days of mindless daily manual record-keeping, it seems reasonable that children's services be measured quarterly at the very least.

Interagency Links

The same children are shared by and may be exposed to similar activities in the public library, the school library, the classroom, the day-care center, the nursery

school, and the home. While this continuum of shared influence potentially can interact to the benefit of the child, these linkages make it very difficult to evaluate the effect of an individual program. A prime example was raised by Benne:

> The measurements used may also hamper the efforts of the children's librarian to enter into a cooperative relationship with the schools. If the librarian visits classrooms to tell stories or give booktalks, is the effectiveness of the activity to be measured by the actual presence of children at the public library within a stated interval of time? If the result is to increase the child's interest in ideas and in the use of materials in the classroom or school library, does this further the goal of public library service?[38]

One of the ways to control for interactive efforts is to plan for them in setting program objectives against which any effects in any of the places will be observed. Do not automatically assume that the results will be bound to one institution. The other way to control for interactive effects is to limit history in the other agencies through their initial involvement in planning the evaluation.

Conclusion

While one might lament the lack of systematic evaluation of children's services in public libraries in the past, the changing demographics of the family;[39] the changing proportion of children in the population,[40] the changing nature of children's services themselves,[41] and various children's services staffing arrangements (i.e., generalist, paraprofessional, etc.) beg for an analytical examination. For those daunted by political, conceptual, or resource constraints, the motto of the Children's Defense Fund comes to mind: "Dear Lord, be good to me. The sea is so wide and my boat is so small."[42] Evaluation can help keep the boat on course.

Appendix A

Wolfsohn Memorial Library, Pennsylvania
Toddler Story Hour
Parent's Evaluation

We would appreciate your comments about this program in order to help evaluate its worth and to help determine whether it should be continued.

Time of day:	Too early_____	Too late_____	OK_____
Length: (each program)	Too short_____	Too long_____	OK_____
Length: (series)	Too short_____	Too long_____	OK_____
Place:	Too small_____	Too many distractions_____	OK_____
Size of group:	Too large_____	OK_____	

Program and materials used: Not enough planned_____ Too much planned_____
Child not interested in stories_____
Child not interested in activities_____
Stories, activities too old for child_____
Stories, activities too young for child_____
Stories, activities OK_____

Would you attend this program again?_____
Why or why not? _____
_____
Would you recommend this program to a friend or neighbor? Yes_____ No_____
Did you find this program helpful in selecting library materials for your child?
Yes_____ No_____

Since you both began participating in the program, have you noticed any changes in your child:

Longer attention span	Yes_____	No_____
Greater interest in looking at books	Yes_____	No_____
Greater interest in listening to stories at home	Yes_____	No_____
Greater enjoyment and interest in coming to the library	Yes_____	No_____
Greater rapport with other children	Yes_____	No_____
Greater rapport with adults outside the family	Yes_____	No_____

Do you have any comments you would like to add?_____
_____

Source: *C.Y.P.S.L.'s Idea Exchange Handbook*, Pennsylvania Library Association, 1981
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Appendix B

Virginia Beach Public Library

Cable Storytime Feasibility Study (Publishers/Titles)

Abingdon Press	HUMBUG RABBIT
Atheneum Publishers	MAY WE SLEEP HERE TONIGHT?
Children's Press	BLUE BUG GOES TO THE LIBRARY
	BLUE BUG'S VEGETABLE GARDEN
	TIME TO RHYME WITH CALICO CAT
Curtis Brown, LTD	PUPPY TOO SMALL
Doubleday & Co., Inc.	8,000 STONES: A CHINESE FOLKTALE
Greenwillow Books &	GOOD AS NEW
Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books	ONE DUCK ANOTHER DUCK
	THE SURPRISE
	PEA SOUP & SEA SERPENTS
	THE GREAT BIG ESPECIALLY BEAUTIFUL EASTER EGG
Harper & Row	GIVING TREE
	MOTHER RABBIT'S SON TOM
Holiday House, Inc.	THE BIG BUNNY AND THE EASTER EGGS
Holt, Rinehart and Winston	BOO WHO?
	LIANG AND THE MAGIC PAINT BRUSH
Houghton Mifflin Co.	YUMMERS
Little, Brown & Co.	MARY ALICE, OPERATOR 9
	ANDREW'S BATH
Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.	TWO GREEDY BEARS
	ASK MR. BEAR
	MUSHROOMS IN THE RAIN
Pantheon Books	CORNELIUS
	SWIMMY
	THE BIGGEST HOUSE IN THE WORLD
	WINTER PICNIC

Appendix B

Virginia Beach Public Library

Cable Storytime Feasibility Study (Publishers/Titles)

(continued)

Prentice–Hall, Inc.	THE CATERPILLAR AND THE POLLIWOG
	LITTLE PEEP
The Putnam Publishing Group	SOPHIE AND JACK
	WHERE'S SPOT
	THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR
	THE LITTLE RABBIT WHO WANTED RED WINGS
Rae John Publishers	THE LITTLE RED HEN
Vanguard Press	THE MAGIC BOAT AND OTHER CHINESE FOLK STORIES
Western Publishing Co., Inc.	HOME FOR A BUNNY
	THE GOLDEN EGG BOOK
World Free Flight Press	THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR

Appendix C

Center for Early Adolescence

Program Participant Questionnaire

We are interested in knowing what you think about this program. Please take the time to answer these questions so we can make our program even better.

1. How old are you? _____

2. Are you _____male? _____female?

3. How often do you come to this program? _____

4. What do you like about this program?

5. What do you not like about this program?

6. Is there an adult here whom you talk to when you want advice or just want to talk about personal concerns and problems? _____yes _____no

7. Do you think this statement is true or false? "Almost everyone at this program has a close relationship with at least one adult staff member." _____true _____false

8. Do you think this is true or false? "The adults at this program really care about me." _____true _____false

9. What are the three most important rules here?

10. Do people frequently break the rules here? _____yes _____no

    Why is that?

    What happens when they do?

11. Do you have a voice in making decisions and planning activities here? _____yes _____no

12. Do you feel safe here? _____yes _____no

Explain

13. Do you get to do something you are good at here? _____yes _____no

If yes, what? If no, why not?

14. Do you get to do things you like to do here? _____yes _____no

If yes, name two things:

If no, why not?

What could be done to give you more opportunities to do the things you like?

15. What is the purpose of this program? What does it stand for?

16. What changes would you like to see at this program?

Is there a way you can help make these changes? _____yes _____no

If yes, how?

17. What do you think is the biggest problem young people your age have? Does this program help you and your friends deal with that problem? If yes, how? If no, why not? What could be done here to help you with that problem?

18. How do you get here after school (for instance, by bus, bike, walking, carpool)? _____

19. Is there something else you would rather be doing after school? _____yes _____no

20. On days when you do not come to this program, what do you do? (Check all that you do.)

a. take care of young brothers and sisters	_____yes	_____no
b. participate in school activities (such as cheerleading, clubs, and sports)	_____yes	_____no
c. receive tutoring	_____yes	_____no
d. participate in other organized groups or clubs	_____yes	_____no
e. do volunteer work (such as helping in a hospital, tutoring)	_____yes	_____no
f. do work for pay	_____yes	_____no
g. participate in a non–school–sponsored team sports	_____yes	_____no
h. play outdoors in the neighborhood, at a sports field, or on a local playground	_____yes	_____no
i. go to a shopping district or mall	_____yes	_____no
j. go to the library	_____yes	_____no
k. visit a museum	_____yes	_____no
l. go to church or synagogue activities	_____yes	_____no
m. hang around (where?_____)	_____yes	_____no
n. stay at home	_____yes	_____no
o. visit a friend	_____yes	_____no
p. other	_____yes	_____no

21. How did you learn about this program?

22. List some things you would like to do or learn about; for example, "tour a TV station" or "learn how to cook."

a.
b.
c.
d.
e.
f.

23. What else would you like to tell us about how you feel about this program?

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Appendix D

Youth Services Department, New Hanover County Public Library

Program Evaluation Form

Scale: 2 = poor
4 = fair
6 = average
8 = very good
10 = exceptional

Name_____

Date_____

Program_____

		Rating	Comments
1.	Attitude toward children (cheerfulness, welcoming, comfortable)	_____	_____
2.	Attitude towards parents/teachers (approachable, comfortable, helpful)	_____	_____
3.	Preparation (familiar with all material)	_____	_____
4.	Theme (appropriate, used throughout program)	_____	_____
5.	Program flow (smooth, orderly, keeps children involved)	_____	_____
6.	Selection of material (app. to age and dev. level of children)	_____	_____
7.	Balance of formats (use of books, AV and activities)	_____	_____
8.	Presentation (voice, movement, body language)	_____	_____
9.	Use of activities (as stimulation or calming factor)	_____	_____
10.	Control (of children and adults)	_____	_____

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New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, NC

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Looking Around

Charles R. McClure, *et al.*

Excerpted by permission from
Planning & Role Setting for Public Libraries;
A Manual of Options and Procedures. Chicago: ALA, 1987.

Looking Around, the process of collecting information about the library and its community, is one of the most interesting phases in the planning process. It is a process of discovery, of finding answers to such basic questions as: What kind of community does the library serve? Who lives there? What do residents expect from the library? Information about the community and its residents helps you understand what services may be needed. Information about the library helps you understand how well the library is doing its job. Taken collectively, this information assists the planning process by:

- Identifying factors in the library's environment that may affect the provision of services
- Revealing community needs for library services
- Demonstrating to community decision makers the library's understanding of its services and its community
- Suggesting possible library roles, goals, and objectives.

This phase in the planning process is closely linked with the next, Developing Roles and Mission (Chapter 4). In fact, you may reverse the order of these two phases. Placing the Looking Around phase first helps the planning committee consider library and community conditions as they select roles. Developing Roles and Mission first can help the planning committee focus its Looking Around activities. Either approach is workable.

Looking Around has six basic steps:

1. Determine level of effort
2. Prepare for Looking Around
3. Decide what information is needed
4. Gather the information
5. Study the information
6. Report the results.

Step 1: Determine Level of Effort

Level of effort for Looking Around is directly proportional to the amount of information the planning committee decides to gather and the sources used to obtain that information. Therefore, the planning committee's "information appetite" must be tailored to match the library's staff time and financial resources. Three factors are important:

- The time available for this planning phase: some information is readily available; other information may take longer to assemble.
- The diversity present in the library's community: a relatively homogeneous community can be described more easily than a complex community
- The rate of change in the library's community: rapid change may indicate a need for more comprehensive information.

At basic and moderate levels of effort, the planning committee selects only a small set of data (see Step 3) and confines its information gathering to existing sources of information (see Step 4). At an extensive level of effort, the planning committee conducts a little more thorough analysis of the library's environment and may use data collection methods beyond the scope of this manual, such as surveying. The citations at the end of this chapter can provide guidance for these methods.

[For a fuller presentation on levels of effort, see "Level of Effort for Looking Around" at the end of this chapter.]

Step 2: Prepare for Looking Around

The planning committee and library staff both have an important role during Looking Around. Generally, the staff is responsible for gathering and assembling the information required by the planning committee. The committee determines what information it needs and studies the information collected. This step prepares the planning committee and staff for these activities.

Assign Staff Responsibilities

The library director determines who will be responsible for gathering information during Looking Around. Usually one staff member is given the overall responsibility to gather, organize, and analyze the information requested by the planning committee. If possible, this person should have experience in reference or public services, be a good communicator, and a good organizer. Others on the library staff assist as needed. Ideally, staff assignments are made before the planning committee decides what information to collect. This allows those responsible, by working with the committee, to better understand what the committee needs and how the information might be used. If your library has a microcomputer, the use of word processing, database management, and spreadsheet software can make writing reports and analyzing and presenting information easier.

Prepare the Planning Committee

Two reviews can help the planning committee approach Looking Around more productively. First, review the basic guidelines for collecting information presented in Figure 1. These tips can help both librarians and planning committee members approach Looking Around in a positive, realistic framework. Second, review with the committee the range of information that might be considered. In so, doing, consider information about the library's community (Looking Around Outside) and information about the library itself (Looking Around Inside).

LOOKING AROUND OUTSIDE

Communities and their residents differ. These differences translate into service demands on the library. For example, an actively growing community with a diverse, highly educated population will place different demands on the library than a

community whose industries are declining and whose residents are predominantly unemployed blue–collar workers. The categories below suggest types of information that the planning committee might obtain.

- **Demographics:** the age, sex, racial, ethnic, educational, and income levels of residents; family characteristics, such as single heads of household and family size; and community characteristics, such as the birth, death and unemployment rates.

- **Economic conditions:** the mix of business, farming, manufacturing, and service sectors; tax base; and economic trends—growth, decline, and boom/bust cycles.

- **Social conditions:** educational and cultural institutions, clubs, societies, interest groups, religious groups, traditions, and community history.

- **Informational and educational services:** other nearby libraries; primary, secondary, and post–secondary educational institutions and nontraditional learning programs; newspapers and magazines; fee–based information services, bookstores, radio stations, and cable television.

LOOKING AROUND INSIDE

Looking Around Inside examines the library's current condition. All aspects of library services are fair game: building, collections, services, staff, management programs, and budget allocation. Libraries with multiples service outlets may study them individually or collectively and may evaluate communication and service patterns among the branches and central library. The categories listed below suggest types of information the planning committee might review. Many of the measures cited in the collection and services categories are discussed in *OMPL*, second edition. Libraries that lack information for these measures may gather that data now or in later objectives cycles.

- **Building:** age; condition; code compliance; patterns of traffic for workflow and patrons; signage; parking; appearance; location; handicapped access; visibility; space needs for the collection, patrons, and staff; and adequacy of mechanical systems.

- **Collection:** breadth and depth of library holdings; formats available; use patterns; age of the collection; condition of materials; the rate of additions or withdrawals; adequacy of the catalog (either online or manual); and measures of collection use such as fill rates and turnover rate.

- **Services:** number and type of services; number of patrons using services; effectiveness and extensiveness of services and programs (see *OMPL*, second edition); studies of particular service areas, such as the reference department; and interlibrary loan statistics and patterns.

- **Staff:** educational levels; salary and benefit comparisons with similar libraries; length of service time with the library; satisfaction with current library services or conditions; staff workloads; and opportunities for training or continuing education.

- **Management:** efficiency and effectiveness of internal operational units (cataloging, acquisitions, administration, etc.); management skills; administrative procedures; relationships with other libraries and networking activities.

- **Budget allocation:** adequacy of budget; comparisons with similar libraries; and analysis of resource allocations among budget categories (personnel, collections, and operations), among branches and the central library, or among services (Children's, Young Adult, or Adult Services; Technical Services; Outreach or Audiovisual Services, etc.).

Step 3: Decide What Information Is Needed

To decide what information is important for planning, the planning committee identifies a focus for its information–gathering activities and agrees on the final list of information to be gathered. This manual presents two tools for use in this step: a list of

basic community and library characteristics (see "Information to Support Planning for Children's Services" following this article) and an information needs list (Figure 2).

The amount of potential information about the library and its community is staggering. The planning committee needs to make sure it gets the *right* information —the information most important and most useful for decision making. Too much information may overwhelm the committee, and too little information or the wrong information can mislead the committee or limit its vision. Identifying a focus for collecting the information helps the planning committee make its Looking Around activities as productive as possible. Libraries Looking Around at a basic or moderate level of effort can use Workform C, Options for Library Planning Information (see "Information to Support Planning for Children's Services" following this article), to focus their collection of information. The information needs list (Figure 2) is most useful at an extensive level of effort.

Using Workform C

Workform C presents a set of community and library characteristics useful for many libraries. Typically, the information shown is readily available from printed information sources, agencies and organizations, and existing library statistics. Planners can review these characteristics, weigh their relative value for the library's planning, and select the most useful items.

Libraries planning for the first time or those Looking Around at a basic level of effort may use Workform C as a menu, selecting items of interest. Information not collected now can be gathered in later objectives cycles. Libraries Looking Around at a moderate level of effort collect most items on Workform C and make an extra effort to collect comparative information.

Comparative information helps place current data in perspective. The "Comparative" column on Workform C could contain as appropriate: historic information (such as library service statistics from last year or 5 years ago); projected community data (such as population projections for 5 or 10 years into the future); or comparisons with other libraries (peer libraries within the state or nationally). Use whatever comparative information is meaningful and useful for your library's planning purposes.

Using the Information Needs List

Libraries Looking Around at an extensive level of effort can use an information needs list to keep track of information of potential planning interest. Figure 8 shows part of such a list prepared by a library placing a high priority on circulation of popular materials and services to students. Each library's list varies, reflecting its unique needs.

To develop an information needs list, the planning committee brainstorms and lists ideas for information that seem likely to be useful in planning. If possible, suggestions for the potential use of information items can be added to the list during the discussion. Ideas for information items can come from the committee's review of Looking Around Outside and Looking Around Inside, Workform C, or a consideration of the following perspectives:

- Planning committee perceptions
- Library measures
- Library roles

PLANNING COMMITTEE PERCEPTIONS

Just as librarians are aware of their library's current service profile, members of the planning committee each have a sense of the community's history, neighborhoods, and businesses. They understand its social and economic life, changes that are occurring, and the community's values and priorities.

These perceptions can help generate ideas for needed information. In a community experiencing dramatic change (such as a town with boom/bust cycles), economic information may be vital for planning. A library in a community with a wide variety of educational and cultural resources may choose to look at its relationship with other providers of education and information in the community.

LIBRARY ROLES

During the next phase of the planning process (see Chapter 4), the library adopts roles. Most librarians already have a sense of the roles currently emphasized in their service programs. This sense can guide the gathering of information. For example, a library that places a high priority on services to elementary and secondary students is likely to be interested in the Formal Education Support Center role. This library might gather in–depth data about school enrollment trends, student patterns for using the library, school faculty awareness of library services, etc. Library planners may review the "Output Measures to Explore" and the "Critical Resources" described for each of the eight roles in Chapter 4 to help identify information useful for assessing the library's capacity to perform selected roles.

LIBRARY MEASURES

Measurement is the collection of data representing the state of the library, its services, and its users. Output measures provide objective data on the effectiveness of library services. Output measures are powerful tools for describing the library. They evaluate the services the library delivers and can help assess current levels of performance, identify problem areas, and monitor progress toward objectives.

Some libraries will choose to calculate basic performance measures derived from existing library statistics, such as circulation per capita, as part of Looking Around. Others may take time to complete more complex measures requiring surveying, such as fill rate measures. *OMPL*, second edition, contains procedures for these and other measures that can provide information useful during Looking Around.

When a first draft of the information needs list is completed, the planning committee assesses its information appetite. How much effort will it take to collect the information. How does that effort compare to the original level of effort set for Looking Around? What are the benefits of the information listed in relation to the cost of gathering it? To answer these questions, it may be useful to group similar information items together. This can help the planning committee identify any redundancy or gaps in the list. If the first draft of the information needs list is too lengthy, the planning committee should trim the list.

Step 4: Gather the Information

Once the planning committee has decided what information it needs, the assigned library staff gather the information. This step includes organizing the information to be gathered, tapping existing information sources, and completing other information–gathering activities as needed.

Organize the Information to Be Gathered

First, review and organize the information items the planning committee has selected. A useful way to group the items is by the potential source or method of collecting the information. For example, one group consists of the information to be found in current library records. Another might include information about the community available in census data or at a local or state agency.

A third grouping includes data that can only be obtained through completing procedures suggested in OMPL, second edition. For libraries Looking Around at an extensive level of effort, a fourth group might include surveying or other activities to collect original data.

Tap Existing Information Sources

A wide variety of existing information sources is available to library planners. Always use the most current, authoritative source available. High–quality information contributes to effective planning. Out–of–date population data, inaccurate financial information, or inconsistently compiled library service statistics are serious barriers to sound decision making.

PRINTED INFORMATION SOURCES

For city and county libraries, a variety of demographic information from the most recent census is readily available in the *City and County Data Book*. Other census publications, the statistical publications of state agencies, city or area directories, telephone books, atlases, almanacs, and newspapers are all possible sources.

GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Local and state government offices are often good sources of information. Check with the state library, planning offices, economic development bureaus, tourism agencies, local boards of education, and tax or revenue departments. They may have updates to census information, demographic, economic, and business information, or information derived from community needs assessment or other planning studies. Nongovernmental agencies can provide information too. Chambers of commerce and trade associations assemble information on the community and the surrounding area.

In addition, planning documents developed by local government agencies, such as school districts or parks departments, often contain goals that affect library services. Statewide plans for library service developed by the state library agency or state professional association may also be useful.

LIBRARY STATISTICS AND LIBRARY LITERATURE

Current library statistics can provide a variety of information, and many library measures can be calculated using existing library records. Trends in these statistics and measures over the past few years can help the planning committee place in perspective and interpret current library performance. Check to see what statistic information about library services and trends is available on a regional, state, or national basis.

A review of library literature may reveal a variety of useful reports. National studies of libraries, library users, and adult readers may be of interest to the planning committee. Or, the staff may be able to locate articles providing information about a topic or service area of concern to the planning committee.

Complete Other Information-Gathering Activities as Needed

Many libraries, particularly those Looking Around at a basic level of effort, can find adequate information in existing information sources. Libraries devoting a greater level of effort to Looking Around often engage in original data collection. Options include:

- **Library walk–arounds and community drive–arounds:** Planners follow a route carefully planned to reveal the library or community in a comprehensive fashion. They look for answers to such questions as: What was surprising? Where was change evident? What types of people were encountered in the community, the library, or on the library staff?

- **Surveys:** Library surveys obtain information directly from individuals such as library users, students, and staff. Surveys may be done in–person, by telephone, mail, or by a variety of drop–off and pick–up methods. Surveys are flexible, adaptable, and efficient, but require careful design, pretesting, administration, and interpretation .

- **Interviews:** Interviews, like surveys, supplement statistical information by reflecting the views of individuals who might otherwise remain silent and by broadening citizen participation in library planning. Interviews may be targeted at groups or individuals. Effective interviewing requires care in selecting those interviewed, determining interview questions, and organizing and interpreting the results.

- **Structured observation:** Structured observation is a technique that studies specific activities, tasks, or events. Unlike surveying and interviewing, individuals performing the tasks are generally unaware that their activities are being analyzed. Like the techniques above, structured observation requires thorough preliminary planning and sound data collection instruments.

While such activities are beyond the scope of this manual, additional information can be found in the citations at the end of this chapter. Assistance may also be available from your state library or regional library cooperative system.

Step 5: Study the Information

Now the most challenging part of Looking Around begins. Again, both staff and planning committee have an important role. The library staff organize and present the results of the information–gathering activities to the planning committee. The

planning committee then translates this new knowledge into a form useful for decision making.

Organizing the Information

At this stage, the results, or findings, of the library's information–gathering activities are largely unorganized. The next task of the staff who gathered the information is to determine how best to organize the information for presentation to the planning committee. In general, group information items in a way that will simplify interpretation and use. Several schemes for organizing the information are possible.

- **Service orientation:** Relate information items to selected library services. Information items that apply to more than one service may appear several times.

- **Roles orientation:** Libraries that used roles (see Chapter 4) to focus information gathering may use those same roles to organize the information gathered. Again, information items relevant to more than one role may be restated with each role.

- **Topical outline:** Use the general scheme presented in Workform C (see "Information to Support Planning for Children's Services," following this article) or, if major trends are evident, organize the information in terms of these changes in the library's community or services.

Try looking at the information from several different points of view. Group and regroup the information. Break down figures in alternative ways. For example, try looking at circulation per hour open or dollar spent on materials per day. It is not necessary to interpret the information at this stage, but the information should be presented to the planning committee in a clear, logical manner. This facilitates an orderly review of the information and helps the planning committee keep its attention on the most important findings.

Interpreting the Information

Now that the information has been gathered and organized, the planning committee must decide what this information means. It translates the findings into needs, opportunities, and library decision areas. This process is not a straightforward

matter. A description of "what is" does not lead directly to clear-cut agreement about "what should be." Interpretation is a complex task calling for reflection and judgment.

The findings focus discussion, but the committee will need to think both analytically and creatively about the meaning and implications of the findings.

Workform D, Translating the Findings of Looking Around (see Figure 4), can assist the committee in this process. The committee may spend one or more meetings discussing the findings and recording their conclusions. As the planning committee uses Workform D, they:

- List in capsule form each of the major findings
- Note briefly how this finding might impact library services —either in terms of the current situation or the potential for change
- Given these impacts, determine if there are any opportunities or circumstances implied by the findings that the library should exploit
- Consider how the library might respond to the findings.

During the discussion, some general points should be kept in mind. First, both factual and subjective information are important. The impressions and opinions of individuals must be combined with "hard" data, such as population statistics or economic information. Subjective information places factual data in perspective, and factual data challenges or substantiates subjective impressions.

Second, watch for surprises. Some information may confirm staff or committee impressions of "the way things are." Other information may, however, challenge long-held assumptions. Such areas should be reviewed carefully. They may indicate areas where change is especially needed.

Third, try to place all information in perspective. Sometimes, to interpret statistics about the library's performance (such as circulation per capita or document delivery figures), it may be helpful to know what is possible. Such statistics may have more

meaning if they are compared to the library's past performance or to statistics from similar libraries.

Fourth, libraries that have conducted surveys should remember that surveys are not ballots. The planning committee, director, and board are not honor bound to act directly on individual survey items. Often those responding are not aware of all the facts or constraints under which library services are provided. The opinions and perceptions of library users and the community at large are useful in planning, but not binding.

Workform D provides a foundation for concluding this planning phase and for continuing the planning process. Chapter 4, Developing Roles and Mission, uses the findings as the planning committee considers which roles are most crucial for successfully meeting community needs for library service. As the library moves further ahead in the planning process, the "Opportunities" column of Workform D may suggest areas for goals and objectives (Chapter 5), and the "Possible Library Responses" column may suggest specific activities for implementation (Chapter 6).

Step 6: Report the Results

Finally, the results of Looking Around are summarized. This summary serves as a permanent record for the current committee and for future committees. The length, complexity, and format of the report varies with the library's level of effort. Libraries reporting at a basic level of effort can use a "cleaned–up" version of Workform D to transmit the results of Looking Around to subsequent planning phases. For these libraries, Workform D will become a key source document for the final planning document (see Chapter 7).

Libraries Looking Around at a moderate or extensive level of effort may produce a more lengthy report. Figure 5 suggests the basic content for such a report and can be modified to match your library's needs. Suggestions for adapting this outline by level of effort are provided in the level–of–effort box accompanying Step 1. General guidelines for the report are:

- Begin with a brief executive summary giving an overview of the report's contents
- Keep the language and tone of the report simple, clear, and direct
- When reporting statistical data, rely on tables, pie and bar charts, and other visuals (individually numbered and titled) rather than lengthy paragraphs that simply list numbers or percentages
- Explain the implications and importance of each chart, table, or summary presented
- Have someone knowledgeable about the library but not involved in Looking Around review the report to make certain it is readable and understandable

The library has now examined its external environment and internal conditions. This Looking Around has resulted in a statement of key findings which have been discussed and interpreted by the planning committee. These findings, their potential impact, the opportunities noted, and possible library responses provide input for the next planning phase, Developing Roles and Mission (Chapter 4), and for the planning phases to follow.

Sources for Additional Information

Busha, Charles H., and Stephen P. Harter. *Research Methods in Librarianship.* New York: Academic Press, 1980.
[Chapter 3 provides an overview of the techniques and principles involved in survey design and administration. Chapter 6 reviews additional research methods including observation case studies, library user studies, library and community surveys, etc.]

Dillman, Don. *Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method.* New York: Wiley, 1978.
[Although its cost data is outdated, this invaluable work provides step–by–step details for how to conduct successful mail and telephone surveys. It contains numerous checklists and examples helpful to the novice.]

Epstein, Irwin, and Tony Tripodi. *Research Techniques for Program Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.
[Libraries interested in structured observation may wish to review Chapter 5, Using Observational Techniques for Planning Staff Training Programs. This chapter discusses the principles of structured observation, applies those principles, and cites a specific application as an example.]

Gallup Organization, Inc. *Book Reading and Library Usage: A Study of Habits and Perceptions.* Princeton, N.J.: The Gallup Organization, Inc., 1978.
[This publication is an example of studies in the library literature that explore patterns in reading and library usage.]

Hernon, Peter, and Charles R. McClure, editors. *Microcomputers for Library Decision Making.* Norwood, NJ.: Ablex Press, 1986.
[Useful chapters for libraries intending to use microcomputers during Looking Around, include Chapter 6, Designing a Spreadsheet Decision Support System in a Library, and Chapter 12, Microcomputers for In–house Data Collection and Research.]

McClure, Charles R., Douglas L. Zweizig, Nancy A. Van House, and Mary Jo Lynch. Output Measures: Myths, Realities, and Prospects. *Public Libraries* (Summer 1986): 49—52.
[The article gives an overview of the issues involved in determining what quality of information is appropriate for use in library management, and gives suggestions for interpreting measures data.]

Palmour, Vernon E., Marcia C. Bellassai, and Nancy V. De Wath. *A Planning Process for Public Libraries*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1980.
[Part III, Collecting and Using Data, discusses surveying as a method for gathering planning information. Examples of surveys for staff, citizens, students, and library users are presented along with suggestions for tabulating and analyzing the results.]

Swisher, Robert, and Charles R. McClure. *Research for Decision Making*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1984.
[Libraries interested in gathering original data through surveying or sampling will find this publication useful. Chapters 3-5 discuss research design, data gathering, and sampling.]

U.S. Bureau of the Census. *County and City Data Book, 1983*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984.
[This publication combines a wide variety of social and economic data from Census Bureau publications. Most information is available by state, county, city, and standard metropolitan statistical areas.]

Van House, Nancy A., Mary Jo Lynch, Charles R. McClure, Douglas Zweizig, and Eleanor Jo Rodger. *Output Measures for Public Libraries*. Second edition. Chicago: American Library Association, 1987.
[This publication provides a useful overview of the basic principles for surveying and sampling, such as usefulness, validity, reliability, precision, comparability, etc. It gives basic procedures for deriving the output measures referenced in this chapter and suggests approaches for reporting, interpreting, and using measurement data.]

FIGURE 1

General Do's and Don'ts for Looking Around

DO:	Consider both factual data and subjective impressions about the library, its services, and its community.
DO:	Take advantage of information already collected by others both within and outside the library.
DO:	Know in advance what use will be made of each piece of information collected.
DO:	Allow ample time to think about and interpret the information gathered.
DO:	Set a clear time schedule for Looking Around activities.
DO:	Refer to *Output Measures for Public Libraries*, second edition, for measures and data collection methods suitable to the library.
	• • •
DON'T:	Allow Looking Around to become an end unto itself—all steps in the process are important.
DON'T:	Collect more information than the planning committee can use.
DON'T:	Conduct surveys unless the library can commit an extensive level of effort to Looking Around and has (or acquires) the necessary expertise.

FIGURE 2
Sample Information Needs List

Information	Possible Source	Potential Use
Community Population: % under 5 years of age % 5-17 years of age % over 65 years of age	*City and County Data Book* or State Planning Office	Check projected student population Check current student population Has senior population grown in the last 5 years?
Total Registered Borrowers	Library records Any changes?	Get current + 5 years ago
% of community aware of various library services: Basic circulation services Children's story hours A/V services Kiosk displays in mall Reference services Interlibrary loan services Meeting rooms	Survey	Is the library well known? Do we need to publicize some services better?
Turnover rate: our library Turnover rate: other lib's	Library records State Library	How active is the collection? Comparisons with similar size libraries in state
Library Circulation Adult Juvenile	Library records	Who accounts for what part of our circulation:
% of students (K-12) who have visited the library: within the last month within the last year	Survey (Get data at the building level)	Which schools account for most of our student use? How could we target a library/faculty relations program?
	...and so forth	
Subject and Author Fill Rate	*OMPL*, 2nd ed./Survey	How well are we doing?
Ratio of additions to total library holdings	Library records	Help in diagnosing the currency of the collection

NOTE: Prepared from the point of view of a library emphasizing circulation of popular materials and services to K-12 students.

Figure 3

Level of Effort for Looking Around

Basic

The library director assigns responsibility for collecting and organizing Looking Around information to a staff member. In very small libraries, the director may handle this task. The planning committee uses Workform C as a menu to select the information useful for its planning purposes. These items are gathered from existing information sources and organized by the staff. The planning committee discusses these findings and uses Workform D to identify the potential impact of the findings on library services and to determine possible library responses. This workform serves as the report of the Looking Around planning phase.

Moderate

The library director assigns responsibility for coordinating the collection and organization of Looking Around information to a staff member. Other library staff assist. The planning committee selects most items listed on Workform C and obtains trend and comparative information for many of the items. These items are gathered from existing information resources and organized by the staff. The planning committee discusses the findings and uses Workform D to identify the potential impact of the findings on library services and to determine possible library responses. The report of Looking Around activities and findings is brief, but follows the basic outline shown in Figure 5.

Extensive

The library director assigns responsibility for collecting and organizing Looking Around information to a staff committee. In addition to the items listed on Workform C, the planning committee develops an information needs list containing a broad range of additional information. Some of this information requires library staff to collect original data through measurement activities (such as those described in OMPL, second edition), surveying, interviewing, or other data collection methods. The staff use research skills and computer support to analyze the data, determine findings, and produce summary graphics. The planning committee discusses these findings at length, using Workform D to summarize the results of its discussion. The staff prepare a comprehensive report of Looking Around activities and findings based on the outline shown in Figure 5. In addition to its uses in the planning process, this report may be widely disseminated to the board, staff, local government, and the community.

Figure 4

Workform D: Translating the Findings of Looking Around

Major Finding	Impact on Library Roles and Services	Opportunities?	Possible Library Responses?
1.			
2.			
3.			
etc.			

Figure 5

Suggested Outline for Reporting the Results of the Looking Around Process

Executive Summary

- Summarize in one or two pages the basic findings, their meaning, use in the planning process, and the overall value of the process.

Introduction

- State the general focus for the Looking Around process: what did the library want to find out?
- Describe how the Looking Around process was managed and over what time period.

Approach

- What Looking Around activities were accomplished?
- Briefly report what procedures and existing sources of information were used, what agencies were contacted, and what other methods were used to gather information.
- How were data collection instruments, if any, developed?
- Explain how the information was analyzed.

Findings

- State the findings, and present summary tables. Organize the findings by broad topics (such as the roles described in Chapter 4), major library service or program areas, or by the results from particular Looking Around activities.
- Give an overview of what the findings mean, how they impact library services and operations, and discuss the implications of the findings for library planning.

Appendixes

- Copies of any data collection instruments used.
- Support documents for Looking Around such as time schedules, explanation of statistical procedures used, etc.
- Any other materials, such as maps, that might be useful in explaining the Looking Around process.

NOTE: To be used for moderate or extensive level of effort only.

Information to Support Planning for Children's Services

(Adapted from Charles R. McClure *et al. Planning & Role Setting for Public Libraries; A Manual of Options and Procedures.* Chicago: ALA, 1987 by Douglas L. Zweizig, 1989.)

Library_____ Date_____/_____/_____
(Give date information was obtained.)

The purpose of the data you will be collecting below is to provide information for tracking changes in the community as they relate to children's services and for tracking the library's activities in serving children. This information may be useful as you set objectives for the children's services program. The information collected can also aid in interpreting the results of children's services program evaluation measures.

Community Characteristics*

Information on individuals

Population of legal service area _____

in legal service area under 5 years of age _____

% in legal service area under 5 years of age _____%

in legal service area 5 to 9 years of age _____

% in legal service area 5 to 9 years of age _____%

in legal service area 10 to 13 years of age _____

% in legal service area 10 to 13 years of age _____%

TOTAL:

in legal service area 0 to 13 years of age _____

% in legal service area 0 to 13 years of age _____%

* Data on community characteristics may be found in the U.S. census reports, city or county planning departments, school district offices, regional cooperative government agencies concerned with planning, Chamber of Commerce, social service agencies. Your state library agency may be a particularly useful source.

For future reference, indicate any additional sources found helpful:

Indicate those sources found best for this information in your community: (Remember to date this sheet.)

Information to Support Planning for Children's Services

Library_____ **Date**_____/_____/_____
(Give date information was obtained.)

Community Characteristics (continued)

Educational level of the community
(% of adults (25 years +) completing high school) _____%

Other (Cite other statistics or characteristics, such as language or ethnic minorities.)

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Information on families and households

Total number of households in legal service area _____

Average number of persons per household _____

Percentage under 18 living with two parents _____%

Median family income $_____

Percentage of families below poverty line _____%

Nurseries and day care centers (If too many to list here, cite a directory.)

Name	Enrollment
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

# of licensed family day care homes _____

Information to Support Planning for Children's Services

Library_____ Date_____/_____/_____
(Give date information was obtained.)

Community Characteristics (continued)

Agencies that serve children (YMCA, Scouts, community centers, social agencies, etc.) (If too many to list here, cite a directory.)

_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____

Schools—public and private (If too many to list here, cite a directory.)

Name	Public or Private [check one]		Grades covered	Enrollment
_____	___	___	_____	_____
_____	___	___	_____	_____
_____	___	___	_____	_____
_____	___	___	_____	_____
_____	___	___	_____	_____

Information to Support Planning for Children's Services

Library_____ **Date**_____/_____/_____
(Give date information was obtained.)

Library Characteristics

Total budget for children's services $_____

What are the key categories of expenditures (e.g., personnel, materials, equipment, supplies, contracted services) for children's services?

Expenditure category	**Amount budgeted**
_____	$_____
_____	$_____
_____	$_____
_____	$_____
_____	$_____
_____	$_____
_____	$_____
_____	$_____
Total operating budget of the library	$_____
Percent of total operating budget spent for children's services	_____%
Per capita support for children's services	$_____/child
Per capita support for general library services	$_____/resident

Information to Support Planning for Children's Services

Library_____ Date_____/_____/_____
(Give date information was obtained.)

Library Characteristics (continued)

Sources and amounts of funding for children's services (LSCA and other grants, private funders, library Friends, etc.)

Source of funding	Amount provided
_____	$_____
_____	$_____
_____	$_____

Staff hours and level of staff assigned to program

Level of staff	Hours per week dedicated to children's services
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Space for children's services

Square feet of space in public service area _____

Square feet of space for meeting rooms _____

Square feet of space assigned to staff offices _____

Total square feet of space assigned to children's services _____

Information to Support Planning for Children's Services

Library_____ Date_____/_____/_____
(Give date information was obtained.)

Library Characteristics (continued)

Collections

Size of collection by type of material:

Material type	Number of items
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Currency of the collection:

% of non–fiction materials published in last three years _____
(Could adapt the Title Availability Sample method from Ellen Altman *et al., A Data Gathering and Instructional Manual for Performance Measures in Public Libraries,* Chicago: Oberon Press, 1976.)

% of collection **added** in last three years _____

% of collection **deleted** in last three years _____

Information to Support Planning for Children's Services

Library_____ Date_____/_____/_____
(Give date information was obtained.)

Library Characteristics (continued)

Equipment available or used for the children's services program

Type of equipment for use by staff:	Number of items
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Type of equipment for use by the public:	Number of items
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

II. Systematic Observation

Introduction

To observe systematically means that one knows

a) precisely what is to be observed;

b) how it will be observed;

c) how observations will be recorded;

d) how they will then be analyzed; and, finally,

e) how sense will be made of the analysis.

Observations can be made through watching, administration of questionnaires and interviews or through diary-keeping among other methods. This chapter of the Sourcebook includes information on interviewing, conducting surveys, sampling, and questionnaire construction, including examples of questionnaires. In addition, this chapter includes material on an environment rating scale developed by Holly Willett, specifically for observing the environment(s) from which children's services are provided.

The first item in the chapter is based upon an Institute presentation made by Jane Robbins. It covers the general observational technique of participant observation. The second item is adapted from the transcript of a presentation made by Lynn McDonald. It contains a large number of techniques that have proved useful in interviewing children. This information has already been shared by Institute attendees in a number of local library publications. It is followed by an explication of a specialized interviewing technique valuable for use with children called backward chaining; this

presentation was made by Eliza Dresang. The next section includes more material from Jane Robbins' presentation, this portion on sampling and a reprint of a classic on sampling from Morris Slonim's Sampling in a Nutshell.

A number of items on questionnaires make up the next section including some additional material from Jane Robbins' presentation, an article by Barbara Moran on constructing questionnaires, and some examples of questionnaires designed to deal with children's services. The final section is the Willett environment rating scale which has already proven to be of high interest.

Systematic Observation

Jane Robbins

Systematic observation requires first that you clearly and precisely know what it is you are attempting to observe as opposed to just being in the children's room hoping that something will hit you between the eyes. This is not to discount the value of the interocular traumatic test; in other words, if something does hit you between the eyes then it probably is something to which you ought to be paying some attention. However, there is also the kind of observation where you are looking for the activity that is happening constantly, but that you no longer see. Observing the ordinary is also a very important part of observation. For example, you may decide that it is important to determine what children really do when they are in the children's room. You may think you know what children do, but unless you take some time to observe systematically, you probably cannot explain to others with conviction.

Systematic observation is done differently by different people. For instance, some people find dichotomies as opposed to continua the best way to understand concepts or events. People who find dichotomies most useful would describe children in the library as either boisterous or quiet even though they know that children, most of the time are somewhere on a continuum between boisterous and quiet. In terms of a systematic observation continuum, at one end are positivistic observers. These are researchers who are seeking to understand through facts in order to attribute cause. They want to know precisely what makes a child come to the library. What is the cause or are the integrated causes that make a child come to the library? They want to collect data in order to be able to understand and explain, even to predict to others which children are most likely to come to the library. Most positivistic researchers tend to want quantitative answers. That's not to say that other researchers are not quantitative, but only that positivists tend to prefer to look at things quantitatively.

At the other end of the continuum are researchers who are more phenomenological. What phenomenological observers try to do is to seek to understand how children

experience things. To a phenomenologist, reality is not so much facts but rather what people imagine things are; reality is what is believed as opposed to what is. To the phenomenologist what is is irrelevant; it's what people believe it to be that is relevant. Observers who are phenomenological are more likely to be qualitative in terms of the material they use for their research.

Questionnaire and interview data can be used either quantitatively or qualitatively. There is nothing inherent in a data collection method that requires the data to be used in just one manner; therefore, in many respects, referring to qualitative and quantitative researchers is not particularly useful. To denigrate qualitative research because it may not be based on quantitative data obfuscates the point of doing research; that is, to systematically question so that others can understand how it is that you arrived at your conclusions. When you talk to those who are unfamiliar with children's services and you say: "The children who come to this branch prefer hearing stories and the children who go to this other branch prefer craft activities," some will probably say: "Well yes, that's probably right. You have a lot of experience." Yet others would ask you, "How do you know?" If one of the ways you know is that you spent a certain amount of time doing direct, systematic observation then your own confidence in your reply may be increased—and certainly the extent to which your response is held true by others will be increased.

Observation is done so that you can determine what is. Observation for evaluation is to shed evidence, not to prove but to improve; to describe a phenomena of interest accurately, not necessarily emphatically.

One of the possible pitfalls in approaching observation systematically is a tendency to get lost in the process of observation. It is important to remember why we are observing. It is so easy to forget the end when we focus on the means. My favorite management text is Robert Townsend's *Up the Organization*. One of the techniques he used when he was president of the Avis Corporation was to keep a sign by his phone that read: "We rent cars." He did this so he would not forget what it is that the Avis Corporation does. In the systematic observation of children you must not let the recording on a form become the end instead of the means.

What precisely does systematic mean? It means that you know what you will be observing; you know how and when it will be recorded and who will be doing the observation. You have determined procedures to insure accuracy in recording. Related to accuracy, for instance, you wouldn't want to assign someone to observe children for a four hour period, nor would you want the observer to interfere with the natural behavior of the children. Also, you undoubtedly would not want to try to observe everything that's going on in the children's room during a period of time but rather pick out one or more activities or groups to observe. For example, you might decide to observe either children or caregivers, or your observation might focus on what proportion of the caregivers who come in with their children are actually involved with what their children are doing. Is there a time of day when caregiver interaction is more likely to happen? The results of this type of observation could have some impact on staffing. If what you are attempting to observe is the interaction between children and caregivers then systematic observation requires that that is what you must focus your observation on.

Of course, there are many other kinds of activities you might be looking at. What are the characteristics of the people or events you are trying to observe? Perhaps one of the events that you observe is that children are often having a hard time reaching material. What you are really observing is the use of the physical facilities (too high shelves), as opposed to the behavior of individuals.

Very often what you think you are seeing, what is apparent, is not real. Sorting out the apparent from the real is one of the things that systematic observation helps you to do. As an example, how can you tell the difference between a young adult who really only has jeans torn at the knee to wear and the young adult who wears those jeans because that's the current "right way" to dress. That is just an example of: "if you don't know what the context is, sometimes what you see or what appears is not what is."

Observational accuracy requires practice; simply listening, which is a skill in and of itself, requires practice. It is possible to learn to listen more accurately. Have you ever been with a child who was talking with you while you were going through some papers or a book on your desk and you told the child it was okay to keep talking because

you were listening. And you really were listening until your shopping list (the one you lost last week) falls out of the book or shows up in the papers, and then all you can think of is: "There's that list." The result, of course, is that you didn't hear the last sentence the child said. You can do two things at once, so long as nothing important or unusual happens in one area. Listening well is a critical observation skill and one that can be improved.

If you are not a skilled listener, you can tape record interviews; then you don't have to worry, because you can go back and really listen to the tape recording. The problem is that the body language isn't there with the tape recording, and so often it is body language that makes the difference in terms of observing what is really taking place. You can, if what is being observed is very important, have more than one observer at a time. Then both observers can check to see whether, using the same method of recording observations, they have tended to see the same things.

Another way to increase observational accuracy is to remind yourself of what you're looking for. Just before you start and again about halfway through your period of observation, it is important to state, for example: "What I'm doing here is: watching children interact with their parents, not interact with other kids, it's only the parental interaction that I'm looking at." Another way to check accuracy is, after you've got some observation material, to tell the children what you've seen, and ask them whether that's what they are doing. They are capable of feeding back, and saying, "What? You thought I was talking to my mother? I hardly ever talk to my mother, but she talks to me."

There are many good ways one can observe things that are going on in the children's room. As far as I know though there has been very little direct observational data collection in libraries, and virtually none has been done in children's rooms.

Interviewing Young Children

Lynn McDonald and Holly Willett

Lynn McDonald has been doing a workshop on interviewing children which has been offered through the University of Wisconsin—Madison Extension for the last two years. The people who have attended this workshop have been social services workers, public health nurses, lawyers, police officers, and teachers but no librarians. This is the first time the concerns of librarians who include children in the focus of their work have been addressed.

The presentation is structured around the following six topics: 1) The first question will be, why is it important to think about interviewing skills with children if you're a librarian? 2) Then we'll ask, why is it hard to interview children? McDonald will suggest that children come from a culture that is **different** from our own, and, because of that, we need to know about their culture and use techniques that overcome the cultural diversity that children present to us. 3) Next, we will contrast interviewing techniques used with children versus those used with adults. 4) We will then present cognitive and verbal characteristics of children under eight years old which are applicable to your own interviews with children. 5) Next, we will describe how to interview children. 6) Finally, we'll confront difficulties by sharing ideas of what to do when they **don't** talk, and what to do when they talk **too much!**

Many of our examples suggest interviewing children about books you have read to them, but this is not the only service about which children under the age of eight could be interviewed. We recommend interviewing young children for the purposes of evaluation only when the results are likely to produce information that can be used to improve services to them. Children's librarians have a strong professional ethic against intruding on children's privacy in selecting and responding to library services and materials; so interview questions need to be framed with this in mind.

The Importance of Interviewing Children

The first question is why should you develop interviewing skills with children. Part of the answer to this lies in the lack of services available to children. Research generally shows that although only 22% of all adults use the public library, 30 to 40% of all children use the library. Almost twice the proportion of children use the library than adults. Yet when you look at the funding per capita in library budgets, the funding for adult services is twice that of the funding for children's services. So, children are high users of library services yet under-funded in terms of program. This pattern is seen throughout all services—not just libraries. There is often more money available to adults than kids, even when kids are higher users of certain services. In mental health and social services this is seen all the time. Is this right? No! What can we do about it? Advocate for children's rights! Anything you can do to support increased funding for children's services is important to pursue, and information gathered through interviewing children can provide some needed support by furnishing evidence of the effectiveness of services to children.

Why It Is Hard to Interview Children

Children's needs are underrepresented in the adult-dominated world. They have few advocates, and, as a result, they do not get the services that they need.

One reason why children may not receive the services they need is that we as adults have difficulty relating to small children. And if we cannot understand a person, it is hard to advocate for their needs. For example, it is hard to interview kids. It's hard to deal with them. They interrupt us. They're messy. Have you noticed that children's services areas are messier after the end of the day? Children are slower. They don't understand us very well. They wiggle. They don't use words well. They distract us. It's hard for us to deal with children. Those of us who work with children or have children at home or nieces and nephews nearby or neighbors have a chance to become more familiar with children's ways, but we may still not fully understand children's culture.

There is a story about a woman who was laying a concrete sidewalk. She carefully put out all the materials, smoothed it down, and got it just perfect. It was a sunny day

and she sat in her lawnchair and was calmly reading a book and having a glass of lemonade. All of a sudden she saw four or five children running towards her concrete, and they went smashing through it. She yelled and screamed at them, "Get out of there!" because she was very upset. A neighbor came by and said sarcastically, "I thought you liked children," and the woman replied, "I do, in the abstract, but not in my concrete!" That's the problem with children—it's fun to talk about them and it's harder to be with them for long periods of time.

One of the main reasons it is hard for adults to relate to children is because they are really culturally different. For heuristic purposes McDonald will describe seven concepts she uses to distinguish among cultures. Applying these concepts suggests the conclusion that children are culturally different from adults.

The first concept is size and shape. Children are littler than adults are and have different physical shapes from adults. Their heads are too big, their necks are too short, they have no waists, no breasts, no body hair, no muscles, and their proportions are off. Most of all however, they are very small and they look different from us. That's number one.

The second concept is language: they speak a language different from ours. This is how they speak a different language: We think preschoolers are about 80% non–verbal and 20% verbal, in terms of how they communicate. Most of their communication is non–verbal. With adults, we postulate the opposite: 80% of our communication is verbal and 20% non–verbal. Adults check the veracity of speech by watching for non–verbal cues, but our primary thrust is to trust the speaking. If there are incongruities between verbal and nonverbal you send the speaker to a therapist! With children it is just the opposite. They are just learning their expressive language, and their communication is mostly non–verbal. Knowing this is very important when interviewing small children. They like to touch things and have them be real in their hands. Their vocabulary is very small. When they're under five their language structure is still developing. By five we think their understanding of the structure of language has developed, and after that increasing their vocabulary is the main area of

language growth. There are lots of characteristics that would suggest they really speak a different language from our own. Knowing that, we will be better interviewers.

The third way that children's culture differs from adult culture is in what they do with their time. We talk and work. They play and go to school. They do different activities during the day.

The fourth cultural concept is where they spend their day. Children have different physical facilities. There are different physical structures for them, and they are very segregated. One of the nice things about children's services in libraries from an outsider's perspective, is that at least they're housed in the same building. They are put over there, on the side, in the low wing without any funding, maybe, but they are in the same building. Most of the other things offered for kids are totally segregated. The only other place where adults and children exist in the same setting is in the family home. We have different physical structures for children, for what they may inhabit, and there are rules about whether or not they can move into the other ones. There are symbols which say whether the geographic structure is welcoming or not to the child.

The fifth way in which kid's culture is different from adult culture is that they have different values from us. For example, they are not as neat as we are. They're slow. They believe in the here and now. They don't clean up after themselves. They seem egocentric. They're much more indirect than we are, except when they're evaluating us, and then they're very direct: "I don't like you!" They're not very polite. So, they have lots of different values from us.

A sixth variable suggesting cultural difference between adults and children which may be unique is that as adults we think we know what children's culture is like, whereas children think most adults don't know children's culture. Adults are like immigrants. If you had been raised in Germany and then came to the United States for several years and subsequently went back to Germany, you'd discover that Germany wasn't as you remembered it. Because adults were all members of that child culture, we think we can remember, and so, we have some confidence about our ability to understand

children's culture. But as adults we cut off our memories and make them inaccessible. Children will tell you very openly if you ask them that really you have no business saying that you know their culture. It is a funny kind of cultural difference because we claim familiarity with the culture, even though we've lost our ability to function in it, usually.

The last issue about children's culture that I wish to point out is that in this country, at least, there is a somewhat covert value message: children's culture is a deficit culture. Children are not just different, they are deficient. They haven't learned our ways, so we say children are "not polite" rather than saying they are "straightforward" or "not hampered by hypocrisy." Rather than saying that children haven't become caught up in verbal diarrhea, as adults can be trapped into, we say they're deficient because they don't know language yet. The negative value message imposed on children puts them into a powerless position: they are told that they're not enough, they're not good, they don't know anything, they don't know how to read, they don't know how to talk right, they don't have much information, they don't this, or they don't that. In contrast, the cultural diversity message could be one of equality and respect. For example, there is only one country in the world that has a law that you cannot hit a child, and that is Sweden. In every other country it is legal to hit children. The value–laden deficit model discussed here could be seen to actually generate violence. People will justify hitting children by saying, "I've got to get that kid socialized; there's something wrong with him."

We want to put the following remarks in the context of these seven cultural concepts because to interview children is to address the issues we have raised.

Interviewing Children Vs. Interviewing Adults

What do children like in terms of interviews? McDonald informally asked children what they like in terms of interview behaviors. They say they like to be respected. They say they don't like grownups to be fake. They say they don't like grownups to be in a hurry all the time. Children want time, they want to be respected, and they don't like fake interpersonal behavior. These are the cornerstones of effective interviewing with adults as well. The variables which best predict successful

interviews with adults are: warmth, genuineness, and empathy (Truax and Carkhuff, 1967). Willett's experience interviewing librarians suggests that an open attitude and a willingness to accept answers as given elicit more information from interviewees.

Cognitive and Verbal Characteristics of Children Under Eight

Here are a few facts about preschoolers; knowing these should enhance your effectiveness as interviewers of young children. The first is, that until they're six to eight there is a huge imbalance of receptive and expressive language. Because their language is developing all the time, they can understand twice as much language as they can express. For example, if you read them a book they'll understand the words, but if you ask them to tell you they can't. It doesn't mean they didn't understand it. They just don't have the expressive capacity. This is part of developing language; children can understand a lot more than they can express. That's so important to remember. Because they can't articulate it does not mean that they didn't understand. For example, using pronouns is very confusing to a preschooler. If you say, "What did he do?" or "she" or "it," they'll be confused. Be specific. "What did the bear do?" or "What did the big man do?" Don't use pronouns. Use simple words. That's obvious, since you know that their vocabulary is small.

Avoid double negatives; they're very confusing to the preschooler. Avoid "if" and "then" complex sentences. Preschoolers have concrete, literal thinking. They think in the here and now, and they're concrete thinkers. Preschoolers will answer yes to anything to please adults. Because they are so very interested in pleasing us, the standard answer to "Did you understand this movie?" would be "Yes." Big smile. But that is not how you are going to get useful information. They do not logically organize their thinking or their speech. Young children tend to ramble. If you ask a five–year–old child to tell you a story, she will take the full time to tell it that she did to hear it. Only ask if you have the time to listen. Don't ever take a five–year–old to a movie and then ask him to tell you the story because it will take two hours to hear it, and he'll be very upset if you interrupt him.

Young children cannot keep two concepts in their minds at the same time. Their ideas about cause and effect are very primitive. In fact, until they're five and a half or

six their causal sequences will seem confused. Piaget describes the egocentric thinking of the two– to five–year–old (Piaget, 1962). What that means is that the child thinks every causal chain includes himself. For example, if you turn the switch and the light goes on, the child thinks she had something to do with it. Or, if you walk around with a four–year–old and she looks up at the sun she'll say, "The sun is following me," or "The sun rose because of me." There is the story of a five–year–old boy in the New York City blackout who was hitting a little toy hammer against a telephone pole just when all the lights went out in the city. He ran home crying and wailing and weeping, "Mommy, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to." He just assumed that he was right in the middle of the causal chain. That's something to remember about preschoolers; it's just a mistake about how their brains work (using the deficit model). They include themselves in every causal chain. That's just the way they are, you can't talk them out of it. If they go through good experiences in their lives, they think that they've caused them. If horrible things happen, they think they've caused them also.

The young child learns only from direct personal experience. The child's understanding of space and time are non–linear and non–logical. If you want to talk to a child, don't talk to them about January, or September, talk about when school started, or when Grandma visited, or when their birthday was. Why? Because they're egocentric. (You may know some adults who are like that.)

How to Interview Young Children

How can you go about using these characteristics of preschoolers in an interview? The first trick about how to talk to little children is, **don't start by talking.** There are several things you need to do before you can talk. First of all, you need to think about the environment that you have for them. Is it a child–welcoming environment? If you work in children's services, then it is; children's library areas are wonderful. The rest of the library building may seem huge to a child and may feel imposing and not accessible. However, children's services areas are usually very welcoming. With children, one or two token child–culture objects can transform the setting from alien to friendly. Any person from an alien culture responds similarly. If he enters a setting from a different culture, he looks for a person or object he can relate to to increase affiliation. It's the natural reaction especially when there is a discrepancy of power.

So if all the people in the room have more power, and one person with less power comes in, he'll look to see if there's anyone else in that category of less power. As soon as there is, he feels better.

You've seen that with children. If they walk into the library and see another child they feel better. It means it's safe. If there is no other child there and then they see something that looks like children's culture, they will feel better. Without seeing a welcome sign, children may assume non-welcome, and they may retreat and become difficult to interview. You then have to overcome the environment somehow yourself. McDonald always takes little child's culture objects such as small toys in her purse when she goes to do an interview, just in case the alien environment does not provide symbols for overcoming the negative cultural bias.

So, the first thing is to think about is the environment. On a more personal level, you can change how you are dressed and how you present yourself for working with children. Kids like color. Kids like things on you that are objects of interest. One reason for that is that kids like to be indirect. They would much prefer looking at your pin as they start approaching you than looking in your eyes. One of the women who taught McDonald about how to interview kids said, "Watch what you smell like," because lots of perfume turns kids off. Another expert said, "Be sure you're at their eye level." Children spend hours craning their necks because adults are always "up there." So, either sit down, or lift them up. Rather than having a chair that is the same height as the child's, yours should be lower, and theirs should be higher.

You want eyes to be at the same level. So if you have a little platform, you could put the kids on the platform, and you sit below them.

You want your nonverbal messages to be welcoming. Your body language is going to mean lots to them. Be patient, look comfortable, be spontaneous. It's better to underreact than overreact. Be supportive of them. Children like it when adults look comfortable. That doesn't mean you have to wear jeans.

Having an interview with a child is what we adults want to have happen. It is our agenda; it is not the child's agenda. We start with something that we want to control for our purposes, and it is not their agenda. To be effective, alter the power structure of the encounter by saying, "Half of that time is for my agenda, and half of it is for the child's agenda." If you have an hour's worth of questions, then put in an hour for the child. If you have half an hour's worth of questions, put in half an hour for the child.

It is very hard to convince busy adults to do this until they try to conduct their agenda **without** first responding to the needs of the children. Then they discover that it is useful in terms of efficiency to put in the half hour for the children first. It simply does not work otherwise. Children will stalemate you. They will sit silently and be quiet, and you will get nothing. The only way children have power is by doing nothing. They can hold their mouths closed, and then they have power. If your goal is to make them talk, and their goal is to have some power, then you have to do a trade–off. You can give them some power at first, and then they will talk with you.

What do you do to respond to the child's agenda? For the time that is the child's, you have to have some do's and don'ts. For the time that is theirs, 1) you cannot ask questions; that would mean you were in charge of the topic; 2) you cannot teach: "What color is this? What do you think this is made of?" You would be in charge then; and 3) you don't praise them. Praising is a hierarchical message as well: "I think you did a good job." You want to build an equal relationship, rather than a hierarchical one. An equal power message is an affiliative one: We are partners in the library, we are partners together. When McDonald trains people how to not do those things she uses a little microphone in the ear so she can give them immediate feedback, or she coaches them from behind. As you practice interviewing, use a third person to watch and correct you if you slip into teaching, directing, questioning, or praising. Have the third person say, "Wait, you can do that later, when it's your agenda." It's not that those things aren't fine to do, but rather that you have more impact if you let the child have her time first.

What are you supposed to do? During the time that you want to give the child a power message, a respect message, and an affirmation message, the most powerful

technique that we know is to give them the lead and to follow their lead. Affirm their choice of topic and explore that by following, not interrogating. You should go along with what they choose to do. Remember 80% of preschoolers' communication is nonverbal—so often their choices can be nonverbal. Six- to eight-year-olds are 60–40% verbal to nonverbal, but they may start a topic with their hands. After you've read them a story they may reach over to the teddy bear and start patting it. Rather than say, "Now let's talk about the story," you could say, "Oh, you're stroking the little koala bear." That follows their topic initiation, and gives them respect for the choice that they made. Your gift to them, building on the principles of reciprocity, will increase their willingness to respond to your questions later. That is it—very simple!

But this is not simple, it's very hard and very boring, because topics chosen by children are often boring to adults. When McDonald's son was this age they would walk around the block—it would take them an hour to walk around the block. That's not a very efficient use of time. He'd see a worm crawling into a hole and he'd want to watch it. Now, McDonald had just been teaching people about this and felt some obligation to do it herself, and so they sat and watched the worm crawl into the hole. How long do you think that took? You have to set that time aside in your mind with no judgments about it as an effective use of time or is it what you want to do, or anything like that. If the children play with the koala bear and you've just read a story to them about trains, you don't have to say, "I wonder if that koala bear would like to go on a train?" That's switching to your topic, which you can do after you've given them their time, but don't count it as their topic, because they know the difference. They know when you've switched.

Interview Tips

Here are ten tips that we'd like to suggest to make your time—not their time—more effective. Now we're into your time. You want some information from them. How can you get that information from them, after you have put in the time on their topic?

The first tip is, that since you know kids like to play, you might have an object there that they can move about and manipulate as they talk to you. It doesn't distract them. They can talk just fine. If you've put in their time, they will focus on your questions.

Young children are mostly nonverbal; you don't have to have their eyes on you for them to hear you or for them to answer you. So, have objects around. You can even have big drawing sheets. It's okay to let them wiggle and squirm; they will still hear you. It's okay to have them play with an object at the same time you're asking them to talk.

The second tip is that kids love to guess things. They especially like to guess if it's easy. "Do you think I'm a man or a woman? Do you think I'm wearing glasses or not?" "Yes you're wearing glasses—I saw you hide them!" They will grab at the chance to show you their competence with the most obvious things that you can ask as you start. It is much, much better to give them questions that you know they can answer easily, rather than difficult questions. They like it, and then they'll want to answer more questions.

The third tip is that they like to show that you are wrong. McDonald plays a game with kids. For example, she says, "I'm going to tell you a story and you tell me whether it's right or wrong. This is what I think, I think it snows in the summer." "Wrong!" they'll say. And they love it. So if you've read a story, you can do things like that. You can say "I've just read a story about a train going up a hill. Now do you think the train tracks are going through a lake or over a mountain? I think they are on a lake." "No, they're not, they're on a mountain." That kind of thing. You get the information that you want, which is whether they were listening or not and whether they were understanding, and you have made it into a little game where you look stupid. (It's all right, you can go home and see your friends and they'll tell you you're not stupid!) This kind of question also allows you to get information in a nonjudgmental way without prying into the young child's private responses to stories.

The fourth thing that kids like is repetition. They love rituals and repetition. That's how they make connections with each other. You could read the same book fifteen times to the same group, one time after another. It is adults who get bored, not young children. You can have them listen for different things. One of the great things about home VCRs is that children can watch the same thing on the TV screen again and again and again. They love it because they can achieve mastery over it. We have always been able to do this with books—read them over and over. Young children love repetition because it

increases their power: "I know what's going to happen next!" That doesn't mean they're bored, they love it. They're not like teenagers who are in a different developmental stage. Little kids love repetition. On the fourth page you say, "Okay now, I've read this three times. I'm going to read a little bit, and I want to see if you know what happens next." When you put the book down, they all will know what happens next, because you've read it three times, and they love it. They love the mastery.

The fifth suggestion is that they like to be powerful, and one way that they can be powerful is by having choices. Give them choices, don't just give them one thing that can happen. "I have two books today, Mary, which book would you like me to read?" If you've chosen enough books that you like, it won't matter to you which ones are read and the children feel more control and power.

The sixth tip is that they like taking turns back and forth with you. They like interactional rhythm. Librarians see this when doing participation stories in story hours. There are different ways that you can do interaction that has rhythm to it that makes it more fun. Again, it's nonverbal. Repetition is the same thing, it's like word play. And interactional rhythm is like word play. It's taking the verbal and doing nonverbal things with it.

The seventh tip is they like to be active: make them move their arms and legs as you listen: "How big do you think that bear was? Show me with your hands." It's good to have them move or act out their responses to your questions because young children are nonverbal. This is how they learn. Movement helps them to remember.

The eighth tip is kids like to know what is going on: explain what you are going to do. We have to be translators of the adult world, and we need to explain every step. Recently in teaching medical students how to do interviews, the topic was how doctors can better interview a child. The child told them: "Explain everything to me." And that was so right. We just assume that young children know when we're taking them down to the x-ray room, or that they know what is going on when we take them over to the counter to check out the book, but they don't. We need to explain the whole process;

the more detail we provide, the more their sense of control increases. So you're respecting them just as you would a French person who doesn't know how to read English. You have to translate the environment for them. Going through all those details about the library, the rules, how to treat books, having that explained is respecting them.

The ninth thing is that kids like to leave a place with something in their hands. The library is a perfect place to go for children because you can leave with a book or a flier. Dentists know this, have you ever noticed? Everyone hates to go to the dentist, except kids, because when they go to the dentist there are toys for them to take home. The dentists are smart. Libraries have the ability to let children take something home with them.

The tenth tip is a reminder: Kids like to be respected, and they don't like fake behavior, and they like to be given time before you do your agenda.

Problem Solving

We want to talk about two little trouble shooting things. The first one is what to do with silence. You can generate silence with poor technique. Do not blame the child for your own inept interviewing skills. It is easy for us to say that children are difficult and one cannot get them to talk about anything. Think of the familiar tourist story of Americans speaking English to French people, and when the Frenchmen don't understand, the Americans just start yelling louder. What we tend to do with children who are silent is push them harder and try to use our power; the more we do that, the more they shrink into resistance. Silence should be seen first of all as an indication that we are not doing our job well.

On the other hand, there are other variables which can generate silence. For example, children who struggle with separation and autonomy, may, because of their own struggles, withhold speech regardless of with whom they speak. Suspicious children, who have lost courage to test out new situations may keep themselves quiet to keep themselves safe. Children who are afraid that they will be destroyed may try to control the situation by feigning indifference and refusing to cooperate. Depressed

children, who cannot believe that anything good will happen, may just keep quiet because they cannot believe that something pleasant will be an outcome of their speech. Severely disturbed children may withdraw to insulate themselves from strong environmental and emotional pressures. They may be reclusive already as children and have emotional walls which they have built up. For these children simple techniques may not suffice to be effective. They may need a therapeutic approach beyond the skills of a librarian–interviewer.

Some children use silence as a form of insulation. In this case one thing you can do is meet silence with silence and have silence be okay. Since young children are 80% nonverbal you may communicate effectively in silence. Silence does not obviate connections. And finally, some children use overtalking rather than silence, as their way of handling anxiety and discomfort. They achieve control of their out–of–control feelings by overtalking. The same intervention will slow down their talking, i.e. give them some power over the interactional context.

Finally, reflecting back to making your culture a welcoming one, remember that having toys as well as books in your library will help facilitate your interview process. Puppets and toys can be stroked while children are talking to you or held while they're listening to you. But they can also be used in the interview itself, by allowing indirect communication to occur. The direct process of asking a question and answering it is one that people don't master until early adolescence, and even then it is problematic. It is not always easy for little kids to ask and answer direct questions. One of the things that we find is that we can increase our impact by being indirect and saying, "What do you think that koala bear wants to do now?"—when you really want to know what the child wants to do. You can say, "Now, I read the book—do you think that koala bear liked this book?" Whatever the answer, you know whether the child liked it. The child, because he is concrete and literal, can only generate the koala bear's thoughts as his own. It is only when children are a little older that they can start thinking that someone else may think differently from what they think. It's just a trick about their minds, that whatever they think the koala bear thinks is what they think, because they really cannot imagine anything else. This indirect questioning is so much less threatening that children will talk and talk and talk about what the koala bear

thinks, and you've found out exactly what they think. There's no translation there; it is simply what the child thinks.

There's one last thing that seems important to mention from the perspective of a mental health professional. McDonald currently manages several projects that are family oriented. The projects are for children in trouble. Rather than taking the child alone into therapy, the project staff see the whole family, and usually the staff go to the home, or have multiple family groups. One program is called "Families and Schools Together" (F.A.S.T.). It's a family strengthening project for kids who are high risk and poor learners and who are six to nine years old. These are all hard to reach, low income families. The parents have had terrible experiences with the schools, themselves. The program's goals include trying to increase their feelings of affiliation toward learning and school. Obviously the parents and the connections they have with the children with books are important.

As you use some of these techniques yourself, you may have the chance to model for parents and they could benefit as well as the library. These techniques could also prove beneficial for busy parents and dual-career families who like to have the library as part of their lives but don't seem to have time to read with their kids. You could invite the parents to do some of this with their child at the library. You could have mothers and daughters days or daddies and daughters days for coming in to the library, and you could have tables set up for one-to-one reading together time. Or you could read the story and you could have the mother with her son doing these things I've been describing. That would enhance both their connection with each other as well as letting them take the book home.

We have presented to you why it is important to interview children, why it is hard to interview them, and we have argued that children are culturally different from adults. We have discussed what kids like in interviewing, how they think and talk, and what some tips are which we can use to help make connections with children in order to get the most out of the library.

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Interviewing Using Micro–moments and Backward Chaining

Eliza Dresang

The interview technique called backward chaining is an interviewing method used to find out what an event really means to a child. It is not meant to evaluate the content of the event or to be a lesson; there is no hidden didactic purpose. It simply means "what more do you know now that you did not know before." The end product of backward chaining is finding out what did an event mean to you.

Essentially, this is a communication process that has three phases: sense–making, micro–moments, and backward chaining. In this article this jargon will be explained and an understanding of the technique developed.

Brenda Dervin, a professor of communication at Ohio State University, developed this process which I have modified for use with children. Dervin has a special interest in libraries and in 1977 published an article "Public library use, users, uses" which she wrote with Douglas Zweizig. She claims that one can not make sense of a user's library encounter just by knowing the demographic characteristics of the user. Each user has many such characteristics: gender, race, age, and socioeconomic class being some examples. Trying to determine which characteristics are important in an encounter is not a highly reliable way of sense making in a library situation.

In 1980 as I began my doctoral research while developing an experimental design, I began to focus on attitude changes in students. Reviewing communications literature, I became interested in Brenda Dervin's qualitative approach to information. I decided to interview students using an adapted sense–making kind of interview to find out if the communication situation had any personal meaning for the child participating beyond a prescribed or anticipated meaning.

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The results were very exciting. This type of interviewing does work with children. I share Lynn MacDonald's enthusiasm for learning ways to talk with children and understand what's important to them; to help them verbalize their innermost feelings.

Why use it? In Karen Krueger's presentation, she suggested that **direct feedback** is needed from users, not just observation. How can this be done? Interviewing, a technique that has been tried by very few librarians, is a method that will elicit such feedback. It will be seen also to have relevance to discussion as a technique (presented at a later point in this Sourcebook). Direct feedback can discover what the user brings to us. We can evaluate our services better when we determine whether or how we are touching the personal needs of children. Without knowing all the needs of all the children this technique will work. Even with selective use, the information we obtain will enhance our understanding and improve service delivery.

Who can apply this technique? Who can respond to it? It seems to be inappropriate to use it with children younger than age nine or who have not, in Piagetian terms, begun to move from the concrete to formal operations stage. The child must be able to deal with some abstractness and extended possibilities. They must have reached the stage of beginning to deal with abstract propositions and to think logically about them. Nine would seem to be the lowest possible age, and it seems possible since the interviewing will explore issues that directly involve the child.

The method works one–to–one. The librarian approaches an individual child and asks to talk with that child about an experience. The method will not provide an aggregate of data such as surveys, questionnaires, or user tickets, but it will supply anecdotes that can supplement other data. Anecdotes, valid even when something happens only to one child, can reach administrators' hearts.

This method can answer the question: "How do we know when children's services are good?" A child is asked to recall the major events of a program. The response could be used as feedback on reader's advisory services, or in a more informal way to talk about books.

When can this technique be used? It could directly follow the event. Response validity will not, however diminish due to the passage of time.

Where can this technique be used? Choose an environment that is not hostile to the child (just as Lynn MacDonald mentioned in talking about interviewing the young child). Environmental details do not appear to pose a stumbling block.

How does one adopt this technique? It's easy. A guided way of talking to children lets us continue what our profession is all about. You can not expect every child to attach a deep personal meaning to an event. The interview is not a failure if the child responds remembering what happened in a predictable or routine manner.

First, ask the child to remember or recall the major events in the situation under discussion. Using index cards, write down each event on a separate card. Then put the cards in a timeline or sequence. Each card will be referred back to as you ask questions. Each of the events written on a card is called a "micro–moment," and is an event the person being interviewed remembers from the communication situation.

The next step is the backward chaining phase of the technique. The interviewer asks the child to select one micro–moment. The interviewer asks "Did you have any questions (about the micro–moment listed on the card)?" After the child answers, the next question is "Did you get your answer?" After the child responds, the next question is "How did that help you?" This question is repeated and repeated until the child can furnish no more information. Each time this question is repeated, more self–revealing meaning is elicited from the child. After one micro–moment has been discussed, another moment is selected and the questioning process begins again. This process could continue until all the micro–moments have been reviewed.

I discovered the technique's usefulness as well in informal situations to move beneath surface meaning. If the atmosphere is right, the technique encounters none of the connotations associated with inappropriate prying.

This technique of interviewing is a way to make sense out of a situation. It establishes a more formal structure for communication than merely talking with someone or observing behavior. It can illumine what meanings children attach to the services in the library.

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Sampling

Jane Robbins

The employment of observational techniques for the purpose of evaluation often requires sampling because we all know that we could never observe everything that takes place in a library during a year! What we can do, though, is take a sample. In today's world most everyone believes in the efficacy of sampling. If you have trouble believing in sampling, say to yourself: "Would I ever eat the entire pot of soup?" Do you really believe that one taste of your soup will be significantly different from another taste? Perhaps even a better example, if you have doubts about sampling, is related to a blood test. If you don't believe in sampling, I guess the next time, just give it all! You can count on one taste informing you of what the rest of the soup is going to taste like, and you can do a national sample of 1800 non-incarcerated adults and get an accurate measure of what a particular adult attitude is, or what a probable behavior will be among a group of individuals, or who will win an election, or who will support a library referendum, as just a few examples.

The key for sampling is this: if you are going to take the time to do a survey of users (for example of parents who you think might be bringing children to the library), you might as well do the survey correctly. If you don't have a good sample you can conclude nothing from the data you collected. Since presumably you are doing the survey so you can collect accurate information, you want information that is valid. (If you want to lie, then don't bother to collect data, just say what it is you want to say. After all, others are not above doing it, so you can do it too.) But, if you are going to go into the process of collecting data from people, design instruments and a sample that will let you say: "I feel confident that this is what is going on in this library." The information you collect is intended as a base from which you can do good planning for the delivery of effective children's services.

Sampling can be relatively easy, but for a survey of your entire community you will undoubtedly want to ask someone who has a background in sampling design to design your sample; for example, someone from a marketing department of a large corporation. In order for them to help you, however, they need you to understand some of their language. (What you need to know can be compared to what librarians needed to know about computing when computers first came into libraries. Computer specialists came to libraries and too few librarians had sufficient basic information to support a useful conversation; so, the computer specialists designed the computer they believed the library ought to have instead of the computer which the library needed. It took rather a lot of false starts before librarians could gain control of the computer world in libraries.) With sampling there is not a great deal you have to know in order to be able to have a productive conversation with a sampling designer. A sampling designer will ask you how much you already know about the things or people to be sampled. They will want to know why it is you want to draw a sample. They need you to be able to articulate all the intellectual reasons why you want to do it. If you can explain these things clearly, then someone else can draw an appropriate sample. Still, there is some language about sampling that you will want to know.

First, you hear people talk about populations or universes in sampling. The universe is all of whatever it is you are interested in sampling. If what you want is a sample of children that use your library, then the universe is every child who uses your library. A major problem in terms of actually creating a sample is developing or finding what is called the sampling frame. In the example of children who use your library — how would you develop a list of the children who use your library? Perhaps a list from circulation records for the past year of every child who checked out one or more books could serve as the sampling frame. If you don't have access to circulation records, then the frame may have to be children in the school districts surrounding the library—or you may have to keep a list of children in the library for a month and then draw a sample from that list.

Could you accurately count every child who comes into the children's room on a yearly basis? Undoubtedly not. But you can accurately count if you sample. Although we are always worried about sampling error (and samples are open to error) still there

is much we can do to control it. What we do in a sample is work with two different concepts. These concepts tell us how large the sample has to be in order to have a sample which only has a controlled amount of error. The two concepts or factors that are involved in making a precise sample size determination are tolerance and confidence.

When people are talking about tolerance, they are talking about the percent within which the measure that they have calculated is the measure which would have been calculated if somehow a perfectly accurate 100% count could be taken. For example, one might want to take a sample of the number of children who are using the children's department. (To be precise, it is not the number of children but rather the number of uses by children of the children's department.) The decision is to take a sample which would accurately represent the number of uses by children within 5%, which is to say a sample that would tell us within 5% more or 5% less of what the true number of uses are. Why within ± 5%? Because it really doesn't make a great deal of difference if you have **perfect** accuracy. (A useful analogy may be estimating the number of miles from Chicago, IL to Cheyenne, WY; if it is 907 miles, it could be estimated at 900 miles; is it important whether it's perfectly accurate?) So, by further analogy, if you intended to make some staffing decisions and you obtained a measure from a sample that said that there are 5600 uses by children of the children's room in a year, what you would really be saying if you set your tolerance level at 5%, is that it could be as many as 5880 child uses, but it also could be as low as 5320 child uses even though the measure you obtained was 5600 child uses. You see or hear examples of tolerance; for example, estimates of voter preference. The sample may have obtained 52% of the people for Dukakis—give or take 2 percentage points. This means it could be 54% are for him or only 50% are for him.

Setting an acceptable tolerance level is a very important part of determining how large a sample size is needed. You should have some sense of how accurate your measure of child use needs to be for you to reach a management/planning decision. If the estimate must be within 1% you have to have a larger sample than if a 5% tolerance level is acceptable. If within 10% will do, you will need a smaller sample size than you would for 5%. Tolerance level is a major consideration related to how much effort

will be expended in collecting data because it is related to sample size. A sample designer will need to know what you consider an acceptable tolerance level; most social scientists select a 3 to 5% level.

A second piece of information needed for determining sample size has to do with the confidence interval. Some of you may have heard of this even more often. The confidence interval is related to how willing you are to risk that the sample you select is not an accurate sample of the population. Any time you sample, there is a chance that the sample may not be accurate. You can control that chance by setting confidence intervals of one (1) out of 100 samples or five (5) out of 100 samples. I think often people lose track of just how probable it is to get an accurate sample 95 out of 100 times. As an example, if I had a hat with $500,000 in it for your children's department and I told you that 95 out of 100 times when you put your hand in this hat you were going to get $500,000 for your children's department and 5 times out of 100 times you were going to have to give up half of your department's budget, how many of you would stick your hand in the hat? The probability is pretty darn good that you are going to walk away with $500,000 for your children's department! I think most of you would take that risk. By convention most social science research uses the .05 confidence interval. An .01 confidence interval (i.e., 1 out of 100 samples could be inaccurate) would require a larger sample. Rarely, except in testing pharmaceuticals, is a confidence interval less than .05 warranted.

It would be simple for me to tell you that you now know just about all you have to know about sampling. Obviously there are people who spend their entire lifetime studying sample design, but understanding tolerance and confidence are essential to understanding determination of sample size.

Another concept of interest related to sample size is sample type. The most typical sample and the one that forms the basis for all other probability samples is the random sample. A random sample requires that every item being sampled (e.g. for example children coming into the library) has the same probability, the same likelihood, of being chosen in your sample as any other item. Now you **do** know the minimum of everything you **have** to know to have someone else draw a sample for you.

Introduction to *Sampling in a Nutshell*

Morris Slonim

Simon and Schuster, 1960. Reprinted by permission.

Everyone who has poured a highball into the nearest potted plant after taking one sip has had some experience in sampling. The abstemious reader doubtless has at one time or other pushed aside a bowl of tepid mush after swallowing a spoonful. He, too, has unwittingly employed a sampling technique. It is not necessary, one perceives, to have a graduate degree in mathematics to become reasonably proficient in sampling matters, in a practical sort of way. Naturally, one needs more than a stirring rod or a soupspoon to become a sampling expert. However, the treatment of this subject has frequently been at too stratospheric a level. Complex formulas and jawbreaking terms have been piled high and deep (whence the abbreviation Ph.D.), to the vexation and confusion of the reader.

There is a tendency among some statisticians, as there is among some lawyers, doctors, economists and the like, to use technical terms to excess. Many laymen suspect that this is done to impress or confuse, or perhaps to justify a higher fee. Whatever the purpose, this practice is unnecessary in many cases. Such statistical terms as "leptokurtic," "homoscedasticity" and "interpenetrating replicate subsamples" may be very descriptive; however, it is mildly deplorable that statisticians have not coined simpler expressions for most of these technical terms. Few fishermen, for example, would refer to a "reticulated lattice joined at the interstices"; while the term may be highly descriptive, most of them use the simpler "net."

To be sure, the origins of sampling lie in probability theory. It is true, also, that the development of sampling theory requires a rather thorough mathematical training. Nevertheless, it is believed that the subject can be presented in a sufficiently nontechnical manner to provide the so–called layman with a fair basic understanding of it. *Sampling in a Nutshell* will present the subject at the whalebone or oceanbottom

level. Those whose number sense is sufficiently keen to enable them to count all the way to ten without removing their mittens should be able to manage, while those who wangled a C-plus or better in high-school algebra will find it ridiculously simple (or vice versa).

Essentially, sampling consists of obtaining information from a portion of a larger group, or "universe." This universe represents the entire lot on which some item or items of information are desired. The universe we desire to sample may be a large kettle of small fish, all the apes who wandered into apiaries by mistake last year, or the number of U.S.A.F. troops wearing 15-EEEE shoes.

The circumstances in a particular problem will determine the sampling method or combination of methods to be employed. A variety of methods is available and the principal ones will be covered in subsequent chapters.

Advantages of Sampling

A natural and legitimate question that many readers will ask is, "What advantages does a sample possess over a complete count?" The answer in brief is that sampling often permits the executive to cut costs, reduce manpower requirements, gather vital information more quickly, obtain data that could not possibly be available otherwise, obtain more comprehensive data, and actually increase the accuracy of his figures in some instances. In addition, some sampling methods (as will be noted later) make it possible to measure the reliability of the sample estimates from the sample itself. Illustrations of some advantages of sampling are listed in the following paragraphs.

The accountants for one airline formerly computed 100,000 fares each month on portions of tickets due other air carriers. They later found they could estimate the intercompany settlements quite accurately by sampling around 10,000 of the 100,000 documents at a considerable dollar saving (see Chapter XVII). Some department stores and other large business establishments have discovered they can use samples, rather than take inventory of their entire stock, with considerable accuracy and a considerable reduction in inventory takers.

The need for data in a limited time period frequently makes it imperative to sample. Suppose an executive wants to know whether his superannuated accounts receivable constitute a real problem. He asks for a quick estimate of the age distribution of these accounts. If the company has 25,000 altogether, our executive might be able to get his estimate much more rapidly (and with sufficient accuracy for his purpose) from a sample of, say, 1,000 accounts.

An aspirant for political office wishes to know if he has a fighting chance of being elected, before he announces his candidacy. To sound out each of several hundred thousand voters would be costly and would take an unreasonably long period to accomplish. He therefore has a research agency sample the opinions of a relatively small group. To be sure, our office seeker will probably decide to run regardless of the results of the sample survey.

There are many instances where sampling is the only way to get at the facts. As a case in point, the manufacturer of firecrackers must know whether they will explode. Accordingly, for a nominal fee he might permit some youngsters to light up a few salutes in each batch produced. If our pyrotechnics producer were not satisfied with anything less than a 100 per cent test, many of us would have a very quiet Fourth.

The Census Bureau, in its decennial attempt to number all our noses, is limited in the number of dollars and census enumerators as well as in the time it has to complete this nationwide survey. As a consequence, while certain items of information are obtained from every U.S. resident that the head–counters can find, additional facts and figures are collected from a sample of one in every ten or twenty persons. The sampling feature makes it possible to get more detailed information than would be possible otherwise.

Limitations of Sampling

Sampling is not feasible in any situation where knowledge about each unit of a statistical universe is needed. Some of us would be overdrawn at the bank even more often than in the past if that institution, in preparing our monthly statements, were to use a sample to estimate total withdrawals. Neither should we expect the Internal

Revenue Service soon to announce that we may henceforth estimate our income and deductions from sample records. Consider, too, the deafening outcry from those affected if some employers decided to pay only a sample of their workers each payday.

Although the point is often exaggerated by the disbelievers, it is true that occasionally a "wild" sample may crop up, with misleading results. The sampling error may be larger than expected, too, if the sample is improperly designed, or incorrectly carried out. There are numerous situations, finally, where the units to be measured are so rare, or their variability so great, that a sample would be a waste of money.

Although sampling is constantly gaining greater acceptance in private industry and in government, many people are still skeptical about, if not downright suspicious of, the accuracy of any figures obtained from a partial rather than a complete count. In part, this reflects a natural reluctance to accept the evidence provided by a small number as correct for the entire group under study. In larger part, it is due to some careless applications of sampling methods in the past.

NOTE: Although tempted, we shall not use the very much overworked example of a certain publication that expired following a Presidential election poll that turned out disastrously. If every writer who has cited that incident as an example of improper sampling were to contribute one dollar, the magazine might be able to resume operation.

Sampling and Statistics

Sampling is only one component, but undoubtedly the most important one, of that broad field of scientific method known as statistics.[1] Statistics provides the tools for collecting, analyzing and interpreting the cumbersome masses of data that most business and government agencies must deal with in this age of science. In many cases the deluge of data does not pertain to the entire universe or population under consideration; hence, since many of the figures at our disposal are obtained from

[1] The word "statistics" is used also as the plural form to denote numerical data.

samples, it is certainly advisable to devote a little attention to the various methods of selecting samples, and of estimating such things as averages and totals from samples.

Sampling and Probability

There always exists the risk, in making an estimate from sample data, that the particular sample is not truly representative of the universe or population under study. This risk can be set very low by using "probability" sampling methods and appropriate estimating techniques,[2] and by taking a sufficiently large sample, although it can never be eliminated completely. Fortunately for us, a French playboy, the Chevalier de Mere, in his eagerness to pin down the odds in a variety of gambling games, stimulated some of the most celebrated mathematicians of his day into developing a very fascinating branch of mathematics known as probability theory. Development of this subject made possible the growth of present–day scientific sampling. While sampling and sample estimates are possible without the existence of probability theory, knowledge of the degree of reliability we can attach to sample estimates would not be possible, except in special instances. We could, it is true, take a large number of samples of a given size to determine the extent of variation in an estimate, but this is very seldom practicable.

Most of us have at least an obscure notion as to the meaning of probability. In fact, many who have never been inside a school of higher learning can figure the probabilities on a dice game more rapidly than a trained mathematician. Similarly, a fight fan without book learning in mathematics mentally assesses the probability that a specified boxer will beat his opponent before he offers 3 to 1 on his favorite.

A rather oversimplified definition of probability may be illustrated as follows:

If a certain event can occur in 6 ways out of a total of 36 ways that are equally likely, the probability of the event is defined as the ratio 6/36 (or 1/6). For, suppose we had a red die and a green die, the following 36 equally likely arrangements of the two dice could occur:[3]

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2 Probability sampling and estimating techniques are discussed in subsequent pages.

3 Assuming the dice are not loaded, shaved, rounded, or otherwise rigged for or against the roller.

Red Die	Green Die	Red Die	Green Die	Red Die	Green Die
1	1	3	1	5	1
1	2	3	2	5	2
1	3	3	3	5	3
1	4	3	4	5	4
1	5	3	5	5	5
1	6	3	6	5	6
2	1	4	1	6	1
2	2	4	2	6	2
2	3	4	3	6	3
2	4	4	4	6	4
2	5	4	5	6	5
2	6	4	6	6	6

Of these 36 ways, 6 are seen to give a total of seven dots (the connected pairs). From our definition above, the probability of rolling a seven with two dice is seen to be 6/36, or 1/6. Similarly the probability of getting a total of two dots on a throw of two dice would be 1/36, because the two dots (or "snake eyes") can be thrown in only one way.

Similarly, we can readily determine that the probability of getting two heads in one toss of two coins is 1/4, or .25.

Coin 1	Coin 2
Head	Head
Head	Tail
Tail	Head
Tail	Tail

NOTE: If the probability that an event will occur is 1/4, then the probability it will not occur is 1 minus 1/4 (or 3/4). A common way of expressing probability is in terms of "odds in favor" or "odds against." The odds are expressed in terms of the numerators of the two probability fractions. In the present instance the odds are 3 to 1 against occurrence of the two heads. Similarly, if a man has two tickets out of 100 in a raffle, the probability of winning is 2/100; of losing, 98/100. The odds against winning are therefore 98 to 2, or 49 to 1.

When we begin to talk about rolling 16 dice, or tossing 37 coins at a time, we must resort to mathematics rather than attempt to enumerate all possible ways of occurrence. It should also be stressed that probability theory delves into a number of other types of problem, many of them highly complex in nature.

Very often in elementary probability, the answers to problems are not at all what one would expect intuitively. Following are two simple examples that will illustrate this point

1. *The "Birthday Paradox"*

Readers may find it diverting or even profitable to learn about the "Birthday Paradox." This concerns itself with the odds that at least two persons in a group of 30 have the same birthday. The uninitiated layman usually estimates (following some celeritous cerebrations), that the odds are around 11 to 1 against the occurrence of such an event. His reasoning is along the following lines: There are 365 possible birthdays and only 30 people; hence the probability is 30 in 365, or approximately 1 in 12, of a match in birthdays. Actually, the odds are better than 2 to 1 that at least two of the thirty people will have the same birthday.

In order to check the theoretical odds in an actual case, the author selected, at random, page 188 in the *Air Force Register* of January 1, 1958, and tested the first ten groups of 30 names. Nine of the ten had at least two officers with the same birthday. If a large number of groups of 30 each were examined, approximately 7 out of 10 would have at least two persons with the same birthday. The dubious reader can check these odds by sampling several different groups of 30 people from such publications as *Who's Who, Men of Science,* etc.

Experience, as well as mathematics, in this instance discloses the error in one's intuitive feeling that the occurrence of multiple birthdays in a group of 30 people is rare. One way to expiain the rationale of this apparent paradox is as follows. Picture the 30 people lined up in a row. Number One states his birthday. The remaining 29 then compare their birthdays with his. If there are no matches, Number Two then announces his birthday. The remaining 28 now have a second chance to compare their natal dates

with that of Number Two. If, again, none match up, one or more of the remaining 27 may still duplicate Number Three's birthday. So on down to Number Twenty-nine, whose birthday may still be the same as Number Thirty's. Each of the 30, therefore, has 29 separate chances of matching his birthday with another's.

Another way to explain the variation between the average person's intuitive guess and the true probability was stated very aptly by Professor Jerome Cornfield of Johns Hopkins University. He said, in effect, that the average person sees the problem as "What are the odds that any one of the other 29 has the same birthday as *mine*?" whereas he more properly should ask, "What are the odds that any one of the 30 has the same birthday as *any other one of the 30*?"

The formula for computing the probability (denoted by "p") in this problem is:

$$p = 1 - \frac{\overbrace{365 \times 364 \times \ldots \times 336}^{\text{30 terms}}}{\underbrace{365 \times 365 \times \ldots \times 365}_{\text{30 terms}}}$$

As one might expect, the odds in favor of multiple birthdays drop as the number of people decreases. For 23 people it's about a 50-50 bet. On the other hand, the odds rise sharply as the size of the group increases. Now that there are fifty states in the Union, and 100 U.S. Senators, the skeptical reader might like to use the same formula (but with 100 terms in each part of the fraction) to calculate the odds that at least one Senator has the same birthday as some other Senator. The odds (and we hope you didn't take 3 to 1 against) are more than 3,000,000 to 1 that at least two of our senior solons can split the same birthday cake!

2. *The Derby Problem*

Ten men wearing size-7 black derbies attend a party. On departing, each reaches for the nearest derby in the pile. It turns out that the odds are about 63 to 37 that at least one of the ten will retrieve his own hardtop. Suppose instead that there had been 10,000 men in the same situation. Of a number of people queried by the author, most

thought that the odds would then be much greater that at least one man would retrieve his own headpiece. Only a few thought the odds would be less. As a matter of fact, the odds are almost identical, whether there be ten or ten million men in the problem. Although the solution is far from obvious, the probability of this particular happenstance is:

$$p = \frac{1}{1} - \frac{1}{2 \times 1} + \frac{1}{3 \times 2 \times 1} - \frac{1}{4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1} + \text{etc., etc.}$$

There will be as many terms in the equation as there are derbies. Since the tenth term is less than .0000003, and since every even–numbered term is negative, it is easy to see that the probability will change hardly at all by the time we get beyond ten derbies.

Sampling Error

Whenever we estimate something from a sample, it is most unlikely that the sample estimate will be exactly the same as the figure obtained by making a 100 per cent count. The difference between the two is the sampling error, *if both sample data and 100 per cent data are gathered using identical methods.*

When the data–gathering methods are not identical, much of the difference between sample estimate and 100 per cent count may be due to the variation in these methods. For example, suppose our task were to determine the total weight of 5,000 fish caught by 1,000 fishermen on a given day. We could obtain the required ichthyological poundage by getting each of the 1,000 fishermen to write down his estimate of the weight of each of his fish, then adding the 5,000 figures. If next we weighed a sample of 500 of the 5,000 fish and multiplied by 10, it is highly probable that there would be a considerable difference between the two totals. Moreover, in all likelihood only a portion of the difference would be due to the act of sampling. The lion's share of the spread would undoubtedly be attributable to the somewhat biased method of collecting the figures in the complete enumeration. Suppose that instead of weighing 1,000 fish we had taken a sample of 1,000 of the 5,000 figures jotted down by the anglers and

multiplied the sum by 10. The difference between this estimate and the sum of the 5,000 figures would be the sampling error. Similarly, the difference between the sample estimate and the 100 per cent count, if both were obtained by actually weighing the fish, would also be a sampling error.

Accuracy versus Precision

As a matter of incidental intelligence, it is customary in the profession to refer to the precision, rather than the accuracy, of a sample estimate. The accuracy of an estimate refers to the degree to which it approximates the true figure. The precision measures the degree to which it approximates the figure that would be obtained from a 100 per cent count if identical methods of data gathering were used. Anyone who is of the notion that a 100 per cent count automatically provides the true figure should try counting and re–counting a heap of boiled peas the size of a dunce cap until he gets the same total twice.

Probability Sampling

To be sure, a sample always carries with it a sampling error. However, many are unaware that for certain types of samples the degree of precision desired from the sample estimate can be stipulated in advance. Such samples are called probability samples or "scientific" samples and are characterized by the fact that the probability of selection of each unit is known.

For example, if we numbered twenty identical plastic chips from 1 to 20 and mixed them carefully before selecting one, the chance (or probability) of selecting any one of the chips would be one in twenty, or 1/20. If we added five more chips containing the number 7, the probability of selecting a 7 would be 6/25, while for any other number it would be 1/25. In both cases the probability of selection is known in advance, although the probabilities, in the second case, are not equal for all numbers. Fortunately, in a myriad of practical instances, whether dealing with accounts receivable, shoe sales, inventory lists, military pay records, factory workers, cans of beans, aircraft or any of very many other items, the probability of selection of each sample unit is known in advance. When this is so, a probability sample can generally be selected.

Sampling with and without Replacement

The number of units in our statistical universe may be *finite*. That is to say, they may be limited in number, as the number of pizza pies a man with an alimentary ailment can consume in a year. At times, our universe may consist of an *infinite* (indefinitely large) number of units. The number of "comic books" to be published in the limitless future (a cheery prospect) is an exar. ple. Suppose we had a bowl of a thousand plastic chips numbered 1 to 1,000 from which we plan to select a sample of one hundred. In selecting the sample, we could put aside each chip we drew before reaching into the bowl for the next one. Such a sample, obviously, would contain no duplicates. This is an example of *sampling without replacement*, which is the same thing as sampling from a finite universe. If, on the other hand, we replace each chip in the bowl before drawing the next chip for our sample, the process is termed *sampling with replacement* and simulates what happens when we sample from an infinite universe.

It develops that the formulas for calculating the reliability of sample estimates are more complex when the sampling is from a finite universe (i.e., without replacement). If the universe is rather small, or if the sample size represents a significant portion of a large universe (say 10 per cent or more) it is wise to use the formulas for sampling without replacement. In many practical situations, happily, the universe is so large and the sample size so small percentagewise that we can treat our universe as infinite. This simplifies the calculations that must be performed.

Tolerance and Confidence Limits

Suppose a grommet manufacturer wished to estimate from a sample the average pay of his production workers. He could specify in advance the degree of precision he would like in his estimate, if a probability sample were used. The precision specification consists of two elements. Our manufacturer might specify, for example that he would like his estimate to be within 5 per cent of the figure obtained by a complete count. This error limit is called the *tolerance specification*. And, since he is dealing with samples, he must assume a certain degree of risk that an occasional bad sample may give an estimate less precise than he has specified.

This risk can be set at any desired level. Our manufacturer can express the risk specification in terms of betting odds, e.g., *99 to 1* that the error will not exceed 5 per cent; or in terms of the number of samples, e.g., that the error will be 5 per cent or less in *99 out of 100* samples. This expression of risk is called the *confidence specification*. Both tolerance and confidence specifications of a probability sample must be stipulated before the required sample size can be determined.

It should be stressed that the manufacturer, not the statistician, is the one whom we ask to set the error and risk specifications. In general, the level of precision desired from the estimate is a matter for management rather than the technician to determine. For management is best able to assess the practical impact of variations in precision on its operations.

Some Additional Arguments for Sampling

It is very interesting to note that the precision of a particular probability sample can be estimated from the sample itself. This most remarkable property of probability samples provides a potent argument for using such samples in place of judgment or other nonprobability samples.

Furthermore, many who insist that the only accurate way is to make a complete count overlook the fact that there are numerous sources of error in the basic data and that a 100 per cent count can be highly erroneous as well as nearly impossible to achieve. Consider, for example, the very likely understatement of the total population in certain mountainous regions where the haze makes it difficult to distinguish a census enumerator from a revenue agent. In fact, a sample can sometimes yield more accurate results than an attempted complete count because the sources of error can be controlled much more effectively when only a small number of items are to be examined.

An example of this is an estimate of the value of the inventory on hand for some 500,000 Air Force consumption–type items. The estimate was derived from a sample of some 60,000 items, and was about 8 per cent less than the total value obtained from a complete count of the half–million items. However, basic records were checked thoroughly for the 60,000 items in the sample and many revisions were made. No

similar check was made for the remainder of the 500,000 items. Consequently, there is an excellent possibility that the sample estimate is closer to the true value than is the complete count.

No doubt about it—sampling is here to stay. Judging from the experience of the past decade, the use of sampling will continue to expand at a rapid pace. It is already being used to a moderate extent in many organizations and seems very likely to assume much greater importance in the future. Sampling is an extremely useful tool with which every individual should have at least a nodding acquaintance.

Questionnaires

Adapted from part of a speech by **Jane Robbins**

Many people have designed a questionnaire but few have thought it a successful effort; yet, just because it didn't work the first time, because you learn so much in the process of designing a questionnaire, you should do it again. The second time around it will be a lot more successful. We still have the belief that anybody can write a questionnaire, but it is the hardest data collection method around. Even lots of experience doesn't necessarily improve the first version. You must let a sample of the people who are going to answer the questionnaire let you know if they can complete it and if you are really getting answers to the questions you believe you are asking.

There are many kinds of techniques related to questionnaires. One of the things we know is that if you telephone respondents about 20% more people tell us they use the library than those for whom we have evidence of use. Why? Because people don't feel good about telling us that they don't use the library! It may be because Miss Schmutz in 2nd grade made them feel like they should be library users; or it may be that they feel it doesn't sound very cultural to say they don't use the library so they just say they do. Because we know about this, one of the things you will want to do is to design questions that allow people the opportunity to say they don't use the library. You could use a question that starts out: "There are a large number of community services available for use. Some people prefer parks to baseball stadiums, some prefer bowling alleys to libraries. We would like to know about one community service available: Have you used the library in the last year?" When a question is stated in this permissive fashion a respondent has some reason to say, "I'm the bowling type, not the library type." How you ask a question should depend on what information you want. If what you want is to tell the city council that 80% of the people in town use the library even when you know that's not really true, you can design a questionnaire to get you that information. (But

why not just tell them that 80% use the library, rather than designing a questionnaire to get the information?)

If you're going to design a questionnaire, it is important to share it with other librarians who have designed questionnaires before sending it out for a pretest.

Questionnaires to be sent to adults are fraught with difficulties. Certainly designing questionnaires to be filled out by children is doubly difficult. Level of language, ease in answering, avoiding interference of adults in the child's progress in answering are all concerns in designing questionnaires to be answered by children.

Construction of the Questionnaire in Survey Research

Barbara B. Moran

Reprintedfrom *Public Libraries* Summer 1985 p. 75-76.

The survey is a commonly used method in library research, and the written questionnaire is a common mechanism for collecting data. The questionnaire is relatively inexpensive and can be used to obtain information from geographically dispersed persons. Unfortunately, it sometimes produces a low response rate, and it does not provide a way to furnish additional information about questions that are confusing to the respondent. This article examines ways to design questionnaires that will elicit the required information.

There are at least two elements necessary to ensure a good questionnaire: (1) construction of good questionnaire items and (2) design of a pleasing layout for the questionnaire. Each of these will be examined in turn.

Survey questions may be classified as unstructured or structured. Unstructured questions (open–ended questions) allow the respondent to reply freely without having to select a provided response. Unstructured questions are especially useful in exploratory research where not enough is known about a subject to allow the researcher to provide meaningful alternatives. Unstructured questions provide rich data, but responses are difficult to code.

Structured (close–end) questions are characterized by a group of fixed responses. Survey participants can choose among answers designed to reflect various views, beliefs, or feelings. Answers to structured questions are "pigeon–holed" into slots. They provide uniform response and are easier to analyze. For this reason, most survey researchers tend to prefer structured questions.

It is hard to write a good questionnaire. Because the quality of the instrument has such an influence on response rate, a survey researcher must write and rewrite items until the instrument is as clear as possible. One of the reasons that it is hard to write a clear questionnaire is that the person doing the survey is usually deeply involved in the subject being studied. The same thing cannot be said of the respondents. What may be crystal clear to the researcher may not be clear at all to persons who have given little or no attention to the topic.

A survey should be both clear and concise. Every questionnaire item should measure a specific attitude or collect a specific bit of data. There is a temptation to add superfluous items to a questionnaire, but resist the temptation.

There are many books available to aid in the construction of good questions; some are in the bibliography. The following are suggestions on questionnaire construction:

1. Make questions as short as possible. Make them easy to read and answer. Eliminate repetition.

2. Avoid questions with negatives; they are easily misinterpreted. Many readers just will not see the negative. In the question, "Do you think the library should not charge fines on overdue books?" many will overlook the word not.

3. Do not use slang, jargon, and technical terms. For instance, do not ask whether the user prefers a KWIC index to a conventional index. The occasional library user will not understand the distinction.

4. Avoid "double-barreled" questions, i.e., questions that require two answers, e.g., "Do you think that the library should circulate films and art prints?" If the respondent feels that the library should circulate one and not the other, the question as written does not provide any option for that viewpoint. It should have been divided into two questions.

5. Be certain that the options provided for structured questions are exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The options should provide a place for all possible responses (this is often done by providing an option for "don't know," "undecided," or "other, please specify"). The respondent should not feel compelled to select more than one response.

6. Make questions as impersonal as possible.

7. Avoid biased or leading questions where a "right" answer seems to be implicit to a particular item.

8. Sequence questions from the general to the specific, and begin with interesting, nonthreatening questions. Questions on topics that might be considered sensitive or personal are generally better placed near the end.

Writing good items for the questionnaire is much more difficult than is usually imagined. As mentioned earlier, the researcher is often unable to distinguish ambiguous questions because of deep involvement in the subject. When the survey is in a rough draft form, it must be pretested to ensure that the questions are unambiguous and that the directions are sufficiently clear to allow respondents to supply the data needed. Every survey should be pretested before it is in final form.

Pretesting usually involves two processes. The first is to send the survey to a group of people as similar as possible to the survey sample. Often the pretest is sent to individuals who were in the original population, but who were not chosen in the sample. The second part of the pretesting involves letting other people read the survey, fill it out, and comment on it. Friends, relatives, and colleagues can all be utilized. The more people who pretest the survey the better, since different pretesters point out different possible flaws. The survey instrument is modified as a result of the pretest, and the final draft is produced.

When items in the questionnaire are in final form, the actual survey instrument is designed. Here, one concentrates on the appearance and the arrangement of the survey form itself. One of the most important contributing factors to a high response rate is appearance. Often respondents seem to decide whether they will participate or not based on the appearance of the survey.

Much research has been done on what makes a survey appear attractive to a possible respondent. Most results corroborate what is common sense. The questionnaire should be uncluttered, with a lot of "white space" to make it appear less formidable. Squeezing as many questions as possible onto a page makes the survey shorter in pages, but the clutter may result in overlooked questions or in respondents deciding not to participate. Always leave enough room for answers to be written out.

Mail surveys and the correspondence to accompany them should be reproduced in the most professional manner possible. Ditto and mimeograph questionnaires should be avoided. They are hard to read and discourage recipients from completing them. Offset printing is an ideal way to reproduce questionnaires, but good photocopying can be used.

Questionnaires are no longer restricted to black ink on white paper. Research has shown that questionnaires that use colored inks and papers often result in a higher response rate that those done in black and white, presumably because they are more eye–appealing.

Good questionnaire design is not the only requirement for quality survey research, but it is an important one. The sources in the bibliography include more information about all aspects of survey research.

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Examples of Questionnaires Designed to Deal with Children's Services

A number of questionnaires are provided on the following pages to serve as examples or models to be adapted.

The first three examples, "Public Program/Group Visit (Preschool-Third Grade) Parent/Teacher/Caregiver Response Form," "School Site Visit Audience Response Form," and "Public Programs/School Visits to Public Library Audience Response Form" were adapted from evaluation forms used by the Montgomery County (MD) Department of Public Libraries. The "Children's Services Diagnostic Survey" was adapted by Jane Robbins from a survey prepared fot the St. Tammany Parish (LA) Public Library.

The survey form displayed on page 168 is taken from Ellen Altman, Ernest R. DeProspo, Philip M. Clark, & Ellen Connor Clark, *A Data Gathering and Instructional Manual for Performance Measures in Public Libraries*, Chicago: Oberon Press, 1976 and is reprinted here by permission of Philip Clark. This "user ticket" is intended to be printed on lightweight stock. Numbering each ticket on the back allows a count of the number of tickets distributed. One ticket is handed to each person coming into the library (or into the children's room). Before handing the ticket to a visitor, a staff member draws a line through the fifteen-minute interval that corresponds to the arrival time.

Each visitor leaving is asked for the ticket received upon entering. The departure time is marked in the appropriate fifteen-minute interval.

The questions asked on the user ticket can be changed as appropriate for the library or the clientele.

Public Program/Group Visit (Preschool-Third Grade)
Parent/Teacher/Caregiver Response Form

We would appreciate your comments about our program to help us evaluate its worth and possibly change it, if needed, to be more appropriate to your needs.

Program: _____ Date: ___/___/___

My (or my school/agency) Zip Code: _____

Please circle the most correct answer for you:

1. The overall delivery of the program was excellent good fair poor
2. The involvement of the children was excellent good fair poor
3. The stories/materials chosen were excellent good fair poor
4. The activities chosen were excellent good fair poor
5. The length of the program was excellent good fair poor
6. The time/day of the program was excellent good fair poor
7. I learned about the program from:

___Library Events Listing ___Library flyer/poster
___Library staff ___Radio:_____
___Newspaper:_____ ___Friend
___TV:_____ ___Teacher
___Cable:_____ ___Other:_____

My child/class is ___male ___female. (If class, please give numbers.)

We ___have ___have not used the library before.

This ___is ___is not the first library program I/we have attended.

I ___do ___do not have a library card.

(If parent) My child ___does ___does not have a library card.

I ___would ___would not recommend this program to a friend.

Please use the reverse side of the form to share anything you feel would help us improve this program, or to suggest new programs we might do for you.

School Site Visit Audience Response Form

School: _____ Date: ___/___/___

Grade: _____ Zip Code: _____

Please circle correct information:

1. I am	male	female
2. I have a public library card.	yes	no
3. I have used the public library since last summer.	yes	no
4. This is the first time a public librarian has spoken to my class.	yes	no
5. I would recommend this program to a friend.	yes	no

Please use the bottom of this form to share anything you feel would help us improve our visits to your school, or to suggest new ideas for programs we might do if we visit again.

Public Programs/School Visits to Public Library
Audience Response Form

Program: _____ Date: ___/___/___

Library: _____ My Zip code: _____

Please check correct information:

I learned about the program from:

___Library Events Listing
___Library staff
___Newspaper: _____
___TV: _____
___Friend
___Library flyer/poster
___Radio:_____
___Cable: _____
___Teacher
___Other:_____

I am ___male ___female.

My age is between:

___5-10
___11-20
___21-30
___31-40
___41-50
___51-60
___61-70
___71-80

I ___do ___do not have a library card.

I ___have ___have not used the library before.

This ___is ___is not the first library program I have attended.

I ___would ___would not recommend this program to a friend.

Please use the reverse side of this form to share anything you feel would help us to improve our public programs, or to suggest new programs we might do for you.

Children's Services Diagnostic Survey

Adapted from a survey designed by Jane Robbins

Please take about 15 minutes of your time to answer this questionnaire in order to help the library plan for its children's services over the next several years.

A. **General Information**

1. How are you affiliated with the Library? (Circle number of correct response.)

   (1) Employee (2) Trustee (3) Representative of Group Users

2. For how many years have you been associated with public libraries?

   (1) Under 5 years (2) 5 to 10 years (3) 11 years or more

3. How long have you lived in [community name]?

   (1) Under 5 years (2) 5 to 10 years (3) 11 years or more

   (4) NA, don't live in [community name].

B. **Most Important Library Activities, Services, Groups**

4. ACTIVITY AREAS

If you had $1000 to spend on children's library activities, how would you distribute your $1000 among the areas listed below?

(You do not have to spend money for each area, but you must spend the whole $1000. For example, someone might wish to spend their $1000 as follows: $0 culture, $300 education, $400 information, $300 recreation.)

a. **Culture** (including appropriate programs and materials; e.g., art books, prints, award winning children's literature, classical records, displays, exhibits, etc.) $_____

b. **Education** (including support of school programs, i.e., homework support for students and curriculum support for teachers; self-teaching materials, learning programs for the educationally disadvantaged, the gifted, etc.) $_____

c. **Information** (staff activities in the location of information and materials, information questions, information programming, reference collections, etc.) $_____

d. **Recreation** (programs for entertainment, print and non–print materials for leisure use.) $_____

Total $ 1000

5. SERVICE PRIORITIES

What amount of total effort and resources should be devoted to each of the following services? (Assign between $0 and $1000 to each of the services listed. Must total $1000.)

a. Information services (including reference, referral, and other STAFF services aiding children and those working with children in the use of materials or the securing of information.) $_____

b. Materials (including the selection, acquisition, processing, and circulation of print and non-print materials, and their use by children and those who work with children.) $_____

c. In-library programming (including all programs, exhibits, and displays for children and those who work with children.) $_____

d. Out-of-library services (including bookmobile service, books-by-mail projects, programming outside the library such as visits to schools, speeches or programs for special groups, deposit collections, visits to the homebound, etc.) $_____

Total $ 1000

6. SERVICE GROUP PRIORITIES

What amount of total effort and resources should be devoted to each of the following service groups? (Assign between $0 and $1000 to each of the service groups listed. Must total $1000.)

a. Children through preschool age. $_____

b. Children 5 to 8. $_____

c. Children 9 to 13 $_____

d. Special groups of children (special services for the disadvantaged, gifted, handicapped child, etc.) $_____

Total $ 1000

7a. What three (3) added services do you think would most increase use and/or satisfaction with our children's services? (Please read through entire list before replying.) CIRCLE THREE ONLY.

More weekend hours of service	1
More weekday hours of service	2
More evening hours of service	3
Added facilities for children's services	4
Expanded bookmobile service	5
More books for preschool children	6
More books for children 5 to 8	7
More books for children 9 to 13	8
More records, cassettes, videos, CD's and other non-print materials	9
More magazines for children	10
More staff in children's services department	11
More reference and information materials	12
More library programs for children	13
More special services for handicapped, homebound and confined children	14
More reference and information services to children	15
Additional parking space	16
Purchase of duplicates of popular children's materials	17
More publicity about children's library services	18
Renovate children's facilities	19
More materials and services for adult professionals who serve children	20
More materials and services for parents	21
More equipment for children to use in the library, such as microcomputers, VCR's, etc.	22
Additional bike racks	23
Other (Please identify)	24

_____

b. Of these three, which ONE do you think would most increase use and/or user satisfaction of the Library? (Enter the number of one of the items you circled above in part "a" of the question.)

_____ (Please enter number only)

8a. If decreased funding forced reductions in library expenditures for children, which three (3) of the following actions should be considered?
CIRCLE YOUR TOP THREE RECOMMENDATIONS.

Reduce number of books purchased	1
Reduce number of duplicate copies purchased	2
Reduce number of children's magazine subscriptions	3
Reduce records, cassettes, videos, CD's and other non-print materials	4
Eliminate bookmobile services	5
Close one day during week	6
Close some weekday mornings	7
Close some evening hours	8
Other (Please identify) _____	9

b. Of these three, which ONE do you think would least decrease use and/or user satisfaction of the Library? (Enter the number of one of the items you circled above in part "a" of this question.)

_____ (Please enter number only)

	Staff Use Only	
A. 1._____Male 2._____Female	9:00	1
	:15	2
	:30	3
B. OCCUPATION	:45	4
	10:00	5
	:15	6
	:30	7
	:45	8
C. IF YOU ARE NOW A STUDENT PLEASE CHECK BELOW 1._____Part Time 2._____Full Time 1._____Nursery 4._____H.S. (10-12) 2._____Elem. (K-6) 5._____College 3._____J. High (7-9) 6._____P. Grad 7._____Technical/Vocational 8._____Other (specify)	11:00	9
	:15	10
	:30	11
	:45	12
	12:00	13
	:15	14
	:30	15
	:45	16
	1:00	17
	:15	18
	:30	19
	:45	20
	2:00	21
	:15	22
	:30	23
	:45	24
	3:00	25
D. Did you ask a staff member for help today? 1._____Yes 2._____No	:15	26
	:30	27
	:45	28
	4:00	29
E. Did you obtain the library material you wanted today? 1._____Yes 2._____No 3._____Partially If not, why not?	:15	30
	:30	31
	:45	32
	5:00	33
	:15	34
	:30	35
	:45	36
F. Did you receive the library service you expected today? 1._____Yes 2._____No 3._____Partially If not, why not?	6:00	37
	:15	38
	:30	39
	:45	40
	7:00	41
	:15	42
	:30	43
	:45	44
(For further comments, use other side.) PLEASE RETURN TICKET AS YOU LEAVE LIBRARY THANK YOU!	8:00	45
	:15	46
	:30	47
	:45	48
	9:00	49
	:15	50
	:30	51
	:45	52

Introducing an Environment Rating Scale for Public Library Children's Services

Holly Willett

Background

In 1982 I was a doctoral student in the library school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I held a graduate assistantship to manage a one–person library which was a books–by–mail service for day care directors and educators. The tiny library was part of the Day Care Technical Assistance and Training System (DC/TATS), which in turn was part of a large organization devoted to the study of children, the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, at the University. The people that I worked for—Thelma Harms, Debby Cryer, and Dick Clifford— had been researching and thinking about day care for many years, and one of their most recent publications (at that time) was the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale* (*ECERS*) (Harms & Clifford, 1980).

ECERS combines the theory and practice of day care into a rating tool for day care workers and researchers. That is, Harms and Clifford applied child development theories to physical facilities, activities, program design, and staff behavior towards children and parents, realizing that all of these elements contribute to the effectiveness of day care in stimulating optimal development of young children. *ECERS* was designed to help day care providers answer such questions as "How well and to what extent are we doing what we should be doing and how well does our environment fit our purpose?" *ECERS* has been tested for its reliability and validity, so researchers can use it to examine groups of day care centers or random samples of day cares. Harms, Clifford, and Cryer have expanded their work and have recently published rating scales for infant day care and home day care.

Among *ECERS*'s many virtues are its clarity and ease of use. Each item on the scale is carefully explained, as is the rating system itself. I believed that such a scale would

be helpful to children's librarians engaged in remodeling an existing children's room, building a new library, or making a major change in the activities of the children's department. An environment rating scale for children's areas could also be used by library consultants working with individual libraries and library researchers studying library design effectiveness. The concept upon which such scales are designed is called "synomorphy," the fit between a program and its milieu. Synomorphy is based on the notion that institutions will come closer to their goals if their environment—physical facilities, equipment, spatial design, staff behavior patterns, etc.—suits the program (Gump & Ross, 1977). If the milieu and program don't suit each other, either or both may change, and in the process of changing, the institution's effectiveness may be affected, positively or negatively.

For example, in the 1970s many schools were built in an open plan with no walls between classrooms and the school library in the center of the building at the crossroads, so to speak. If you go into open plan schools today, you often find that various kinds of barriers have been used to separate classrooms from each other and from busy traffic areas. Teachers discovered that students were distracted by the noise and movement going on in other areas around them, and so, teachers have constructed "walls" of furniture and space dividers. In one middle school in Madison the library's bookstacks have a solid back and they have been placed around the periphery of the library to form walls that the architect did not provide.

A mismatch between environment and program may also cause those involved to change the program. In some open schools, the staff have changed their activities rather than the physical facilities. At a local open plan elementary school, classes are reminded to walk past the library in silence, which reduces noise, and the librarian feels that both students and teachers are more aware of the library than they would be if it were self–contained.

Many such examples could be given for public library services for children. A very obvious one is the library which does not have a separate room for activities so that storyhours and other events are carried out in the children's room itself. To avoid disturbing patrons using the children's room for reading or study—purposes often held to

be more appropriate than a film or craft activity—few programs are provided or programs are scheduled at times when the room is less used. These times might not be the ones which would attract a sizable audience, but the program has to be changed to suit the environment. Library buildings more than fifteen years old provide examples of modifying the environment to suit the program: Considerable time, money, and planning are required to add electrical outlets and equipment to operate contemporary materials such as audiovisuals and computers.

Development of the E–scale

ECERS helps day care professionals identify areas where either the program or the physical facilities need to be modified in order to come closer to providing an optimal environment to foster the development of the whole child. Although they do not often phrase it in quite this way, enhancing the development of the child is a goal that children's librarians share with child care providers. Because the means and methods librarians use differ from child care, *ECERS* could not be used as is; it had to be adapted. Day care must be far more comprehensive than libraries in the things it provides for children, including food and sleep as well as educational experiences. On the other hand, children's services in public libraries serve a broader range of ages than most day care, sometimes encompassing neonates up to fourteen year–olds. Librarians are somewhat specialized in their concerns, believing in the efficacy of library services and resources to enhance child development; particularly we believe in the value of reading in the lives of children. Therefore, we have some concerns that are not shared with day care, such as reference service and lending materials.

The emphasis that *ECERS* places on child development and the environment can be very helpful for librarians, nevertheless. Children's librarians are sometimes accused of being more interested in children's books and other materials than in children themselves. A survey of children's librarians in California found that only 20% of them had taken a course in child development, for example (Grover & Moore, ca. 1981). A client–centered environment rating scale for public library children's services can help staff balance their concerns for materials with a greater awareness of the needs of children and adults who live and work with children.

A new evaluation instrument for public libraries should also take into account the work on evaluation that has emanated from the Public Library Association since 1973. The Association has produced documents on the planning process, the mission of public libraries, output measures, and role-setting. All of these materials represent a wealth of professional expertise that should be incorporated into new tools. For the purposes of the Environment Rating Scale for Public Library Children's Services (E-scale), it has seemed most reasonable to use the eight roles described in *Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries* (McClure, et al., 1987).

Each section of the E-scale indicates the roles that seem to be most reasonably related to that section, in my judgment. While only one of the roles from Planning and Role Setting—Preschoolers' Door to Learning—specifically refers to children, any of the eight roles can apply to children's services. For example, the section of the E-scale that rates Educational Experiences for Children is related to four roles: Formal Education Support Center, Independent Learning Center, Preschoolers' Door to Learning, and Reference Library. Some parts of the E-scale I considered so basic, such as Safety and Comfort, that the Related Roles note simply says "All."

In developing the individual items to be rated, potential items were submitted to an advisory panel which consisted of all members of the Institute advisory panel plus others chosen to give a wider geographical representation. The other E-scale advisory panel members were Therese Bigelow of the Hampton (VA) Public Library, Gale Eaton of the University of Rhode Island, Anne Osborn of the Riverside (CA) City-County Public Library, Neel Parikh of the San Francisco Public Library, and Maria Salvadore of the District of Columbia Public Library. Institute participants carefully scrutinized the E-scale as one of the activities during the Institute itself and made dozens of valuable suggestions which will be incorporated into the scale as it is developed further. The E-scale was pretested for feasibility in two libraries in Wisconsin and six in California; information gained from the testing will also aid the development of the scale. At this time the E-scale has not been validated experimentally; while it may be useful for individual libraries, it is not appropriate for research use.

At an early stage of the E–scale's development it became clear that it would be most useful to actually create two scales, one for early childhood (ages 0 to approximately seven) and one for middle childhood (approximately ages eight to twelve). The developmental needs and the intellectual abilities of these age groups differ so greatly that they must be taken into account in environments for the two groups. The chosen point of distinction between the two corresponds to the division between two of Piaget's theoretical stages of child development, the preoperational stage and the concrete operations stage.

Description of the E–scale

The Environment Rating Scale for Public Library Children's Services consists of eight sections with varying numbers of individual items to be rated. The sections are: Safety and Comfort, Furnishings and Display for Children, Language and Literature Experiences for Children, Educational Experiences for Children, Physical Activities and Motor Skills, Creative and Cultural Activities for Children, Social Development, and Adult Use of Children's Area (staff and patrons). The scale also includes score sheets with space for comments, such as the feature that most affects each rating, and a graph to chart the scores in each section. All parts of the scale are very much in draft form at this writing.

An appendix at the end of the E–scale lists each of the roles from Planning and Role Setting with the particular items that I associate with that role. I found that Preschoolers' Door to Learning and Independent Learning Center have the most items associated with them as the E–scale currently stands, while Research Center has few. Perhaps the provenance of the E–scale in an instrument designed for day care centers is partially responsible for the heavy emphasis on items appropriate to the Preschoolers' Door to Learning role. It may also be that the profession's recent interest in work with young children has influenced my emphasis on that role. Traditionally, librarians have viewed public libraries as the "people's university," a place where people could pursue individual interests outside of any formal education setting, and for this reason, the Independent Learning Center may have more items associated with it. As for the Research Center role, most librarians consider it appropriate for only the very largest

public libraries, and as I was most concerned with medium and small libraries, the E–scale as it stands may not pay enough attention to that role.

How to Use the Environment Rating Scale for Public Library Children's Services

The E–scale can be used in its entirety to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the children's area or individual items or specific sections may be rated after the planning and role setting process has resulted in the choice of roles for the library. In the latter case, one selects the items and sections that relate to the relevant roles with the aid of the appendix. I recommend that the items in Safety and Comfort and Adult Use of the Children's Area be rated regardless of the roles selected as these items relate to all of the roles in *Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries.*

Each library staff will make its own decision as to who should do the rating. In many situations it will be valuable to have two or more persons do the rating independently so that results can be compared and discussed. Examples of such pairings would be the library director and the children's librarian in a medium–sized library or the children's coordinator and the children's librarian in a library that is part of a large system. Politically, it might also be useful to have a member of the reference or technical services staff rate the children's room along with a children's services staffer. It may be feasible and helpful to have a member of the public work with staff.

In rating the library on each item, there are three methods for gathering information on which to base ratings: observation, conversation with staff and users, and documentation. Select a quiet time to look at the room for those items which relate to purely physical facilities. You may need a tape measure to assist you. To observe child and adult patrons, select a variety of times of the day and days of the week when various activities are going on. Be sure that you sample programs, after school hours, peak reference periods, and evenings and weekends if those are busy times at the library. As you look at what patrons and staff are doing and listen to their conversations, try to empty your mind of your preconceptions about what goes on in the children's area and look at it with the eyes of a newcomer. Remember that young children, especially, don't have a concept of "library." For them each space has some potential; they will explore and manipulate whatever is there, regardless of adult

intentions about how space and objects are supposed to be used. For example, many toddlers love to spin paperback spinner racks for the fun of it, but the centrifugal force which pulls books off the racks creates a reshelving problem for staff and a potential hazard for the child.

Some aspects of the scale require interviewing the staff to check such things as the frequency of changing displays and who does them, which outside agencies are contacted, how often contact is made, and what kinds of mutual activities take place with the agencies. As a practical matter, one must ask about the quality of climate control (if one does not usually work in the particular library) since it is rarely feasible for a rater to spend a year in a library to get an answer to questions about heating and ventilation! Tact, diplomacy, and an open, non-judgmental attitude are required to get accurate answers and to avoid making staff feel defensive around some issues.

A third source of information that can be useful in rating the environment of the children's area is the documents that the library staff produce, such as annual or monthly reports and any results of consultation, output measures, or other evaluation studies. Usually these materials will not have been produced for the sake of the environment rating and they will be less likely to be biased because of that, though they may be biased for other reasons having to do with the purposes for which they were written. Documents serve to verify what has been observed or told to the rater(s) and may also add information difficult to obtain otherwise. For example, the number of contacts actually made with outside agencies.

As the rater comes to a decision about each item, she indicates the score for that item on a Likert-type scale. The E-scale uses a seven-point scale with the odd numbers labeled Inadequate (1), Minimal (3), Good (5), and Excellent (7). The even numbers are intermediate points when the rating would fall between one of the odd numbers. If a library had all of the things needed for a rating of five on some particular item but only part of the things for a rating of seven, it would be given a six, for example. Most items on the scale carry some explanatory examples of what to look for; these are intended as examples only, not as requirements. Public libraries differ a great deal among themselves, and these local variations are desirable. One item on the scale asks the

rater to evaluate the opportunities children have to use language during library activities. The examples given are: finger plays and songs in storyhours, book discussion, or creative writing groups. It might happen that the library under scrutiny did none of those things but did provide show–and–tell in preschool storyhours and storytelling contests or poetry writing for school age children. That library would receive a high rating on the "using language" item (especially if the activities were deliberately planned to give children opportunities for speaking and writing), even though staff did none of the things used as examples for that item.

Some items on the scale are discretionary as they may not be applicable to all libraries. One of these is the item about a place to hang coats. In some parts of the county, coats are not often worn; so, this item is meaningless. Another such item is the one about library skills instruction. Depending on local availability of professional school media specialists, this item may also be meaningless, although public librarians should take care that what children are taught in school is transferable to the local public library situation. Catalogs and indexes often differ in significant ways, as do policies and procedures.

Scoring and Interpreting Results

When all items are rated, the points for each section are added and located on the scoring graph. By connecting the scores with a line, it is easy to see at a glance in which areas the library is strongest and weakest. Scores should not be averaged in an attempt to make a single index number. It isn't possible to construct a scale for this purpose that would have intervals all equally distant from one another; an average would be meaningless.

When a partial rating is done, such as in the case of rating only for specific roles, it is possible to examine the scores either as a percentage of the possible total for the relevant items or to set a target level that individual items should reach. For instance, if the environment was being rated to see how well it suited the Formal Education Support Center role, the total possible points would be fifty–six (eight items each potentially worth seven points). The staff could decide ahead of time that forty–eight points (85%) would be a reasonable indication that the library was succeeding. On the

other hand, one might decide that a rating of six or better on all items pertaining to the Formal Education Support Center role was desirable; in which case one would pay particular attention to those items which fell below the desired level. Conversely, staff may decide that since the Community Activities Center is not a role that the library is trying to fulfill, it is acceptable to achieve a Minimal rating on those items that do not overlap with the Formal Education Support Center and other roles that the library is working on. Decisions on the analysis and interpretation of results should be made before the rating is begun.

Like any evaluation process, rating the environment is not a "one time thing." The first time one uses the E–scale one establishes a baseline for comparing oneself the next time, presumably after one has had a chance to work on the weaknesses found the first time through. If library staff decide to change the primary and secondary roles that the library will direct its efforts toward, a re–evaluation would be in order to rate the children's environment for its effectiveness regarding the new roles.

Examples of the Use of the Scale

One of the first items on the scale is visibility of children's staff when patrons first enter the children's area. (See Figure 1). Two libraries near the University of Wisconsin—Madison achieved very different ratings on this item. The first library is a one year–old building in a small town. When you enter the library, the children's room is easily identified because one can see some child–oriented displays through the large entryway. One has to pass through the adult section first, though, and there is no sign indicating that this is the children's area. The only staff desk is a multiple purpose circulation–reference desk to one's left as you enter. There is no desk for the children's librarian in the children's area proper, and the main desk is situated in such a way that staff cannot see into the children's room from the main desk. Unless a patron knows the library staff, he or she will not know who has knowledge or responsibility for helping children or adults with the materials in the children's room. This library received a rating of 1 (Inadequate) on this item.

Figure 1

Item	Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Staff visibility when patrons enter children's room.	No staff visible at any time when patrons enter.		Staff are visible but do not approach children or adults.		Staff smile and give verbal welcome to patrons.		In addition to friendly welcome staff convey readiness to assist patrons.

A second library received a rating of 7 (Excellent) on the same item because the children's reference desk is the first thing one sees. On entering the children's room through wide double doors, the desk, staffed at all times, faces incoming patrons. Because staff nearly always look up at patrons and ask if they need assistance, the Excellent rating was deemed appropriate; if staff were not welcoming, the rating would have fallen to 6.

Of course, distinctions are not always so obvious. Two libraries provided hands–on materials to reinforce perceptual and fine motor skills. (See Figure 2.) The items included puzzles, toys, and materials for drawing. One library was rated 3 (Minimal) for this item because there were only a few such items and they were placed out of reach for the preschoolers who were their intended users. The second library provided more items, placed them on tables where children could easily reach them, and displayed some of the drawings children made. The rating was 5 (Good) on the perceptual and fine motor skills item. If there had been any indication that staff interacted with children working with materials and that the presence of the materials was related to the library's goals and objectives rather than just that it was "nice" to have such things, the rating might have gone as high as 7.

Figure 2

Item	Inadequate 1	2	Minimal 3	4	Good 5	6	Excellent 7
21. Perceptual & fine motor skills experiences. Ex: mobiles, tactile materials, puzzles,building toys, craft materials.	No materials available. No awareness of children's need for textures or manipulation.		Some materials available for preschool children to use in the library.		A variety of items available for preschool and school age children to use in the library.		Large variety of items for all ages served.Regular budget includes purchase of for fine motor skills.

Conclusion

Before the Environment Rating Scale for Public Library Children's Services can be published, further revision and field testing will be necessary to validate the scale. While there is much work to be done on it, the foregoing should give the reader a taste of what the E–scale is intended to do. Readers who would like a copy of the current draft of the scale should write the author; comments and suggestions for areas that should be included in the E–scale are welcomed.

Whether one uses the E–scale, another device, or just one's "eyeballs" to evaluate the public library's environment for children, there are three concepts to keep in mind. The first is to evaluate from the general position that the overarching mission of children's services is to enhance child development, not only for the sake of the adult the child will become but also for the sake of the child in the here–and–now. The second is to evaluate in terms of the specific roles selected for the individual library. The question here is, "How well does the environment allow us to play our chosen roles?" The third concept is that evaluating the environment includes looking at more than the physical facilities. Staff behaviors and attitudes are part of the environment as are the activities and materials provided for children. The Environment Rating Scale for Public Library Children's Services attempts to keep all three concepts in view.

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III. Counting

Introduction

The previous chapter presented a variety of ways of gathering evaluation data from interviews and questionnaires. Sometimes evaluation data are obtained as a natural part of doing business or through limited small-scale investigations that involve counting of predefined items. This chapter presents several examples of and perspectives on this everyday form of evaluation.

We have already presented two selections on the topic of sampling. While it may be generally understood that sampling is required in order to carry out a survey of community resedents, libraries too often continue to use total counts when tallying such indicators of service as reference transactions. ***Output Measures for Public Libraries, 2nd edition*** *uses sampling in order to increase the accuracy of data for many of its measures. We have reprinted the section of the manual that deals with sampling because it illustrates how the principles of sampling apply specifically to measures of library services.*

Mary Jo Lynch, Director of the Office for Research of the American Library Association, has led efforts to standardize the collection of library statistics and to speed the appearance of reports so that they can be used for decision-making. She speaks to the importance of providing data on children's services especially and to current activities that can have important implications for those concerned with public library services for children.

In 1985, a Library Services and Construction Act grant allowed the adaptation of ***Output Measures for Public Libraries*** *to measure services for children. The selection included in this Sourcebook gives the rationale for the project, a sense of what was accomplished, clarification of a number of issues that arise when measuring services for children, and procedures and results for two of the measures used.*

Finally, Craighton Hippenhammer's article discusses how the output measures concept can be applied to management of children's library collections.

Sampling

Nancy Van House, *et al.*

Excerpted by permission from
Output Measures for Public Libraries;
A Manual of Standardized Procedures, Second edition.
Chicago: ALA, 1987.

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of a population (of people, objects, or events) from which to draw conclusions about the larger group. The key to sampling is that the group studied must be *representative* of the population to which the results are to be generalized. The guidelines presented here and in Chapter 5 are all aimed at ensuring representativeness.

Before selecting a sample, the population to be studied should be carefully defined. This is to ensure that the sample represents the larger population in which the library is interested. For example, if children and non–English–speaking adults are excluded from the Materials Availability Survey, then the results for the Materials Availability Measures do not apply to all library users, but only to English–speaking adult library users.

To avoid unintended biases introduced by the people drawing the sample, specific criteria are established, and every person, item, or transaction meeting those criteria is selected. This is why it is important to follow the instructions in this manual for the measures that use samples. For example, if the reference staff skip recording reference transactions when they are very busy, the **Reference Completion Rate** will only represent the level of service when the desk isn't very busy. But the **Reference Completion Rate** may be higher when the staff are less hurried, lower when they are busy.

Sample Size

The immediate practical problem that arises when sampling is: How large a sample is needed? The larger the sample, the greater the level of effort. A library will want to use samples as large as necessary, but no larger.

Samples result in estimates. The larger the sample, the more precise is the estimate, that is, the closer the sample result is to the true value (the population parameter, or the value that would have been derived from collecting data on the entire population instead of just a sample). The sample size needed depends on how accurate an estimate is needed.

The measures that use sample data fall into two categories:

- Those that estimate the number of activities or items:

  Library Visits per Capita
  In-Library Materials Use per Capita
  Reference Transactions per Capita

- Those estimating proportions or percentages:

  Title Fill Rate
  Subject and Author Fill Rate
  Browsers' Fill Rate
  Reference Completion Rate

  (**Document Delivery** falls somewhere in between; the instructions in Chapter 5 explain how to determine its sample size.)

For the first group of measures, those estimating the number of activities or items, sample sizes have been developed and are described in Chapter 5. Generally, experience has shown that for most of these measures an adequate sample size is *one week's worth of transactions.* For **Library Visits per Capita,** for example, it is recommended that the library count visits for one week and multiply by 52 to estimate ANNUAL NUMBER OF LIBRARY VISITS.

For the second group of measures, those that reflect proportions, libraries can choose their sample sizes based on the precision of estimate that they need. For those that prefer not to choose their own sample size, *the recommended sample size is 400 transactions*, for example, 400 *each* of TITLES SOUGHT, SUBJECTS AND AUTHORS SOUGHT, BROWSERS, or NUMBER OF REFERENCE TRANSACTIONS—whatever the appropriate transactions are for the measure(s) to be used. For libraries that find 400 transactions excessive, smaller samples are acceptable, but *no smaller than 100 transactions of each kind.*

Using samples smaller than 400 results in less precise estimates. A less precise estimate may be sufficient, however. The choice of sample size should be based on the library's needs and the level of effort to be devoted to data collection. The next section explains what happens to the precision of the estimate with different sample sizes.

Confidence Intervals

Regardless of whether the library chooses its own sample size or uses the recommended size, to interpret the data you need to know how far off the estimate might be from the true value, that is, from the figure you would have obtained by collecting data for the entire population. The data coordinator will do the actual calculations (using Figure 1), but library management and the planning committee (where there is one) will find the following discussion helpful in understanding the results.

The possible difference between the estimate derived from a sample and the true value for the entire population is expressed using a confidence interval. The confidence interval consists of the value for the sample plus or minus the possible "play" or margin, that is, plus or minus the maximum possible distance that the estimate could be from the "true" value. The result is a range within which the "true" value falls.

Figure 1
Margin of the Fill Rate Estimate

Fill Rate	Sample Size					
%	100	200	300	400	500	600
10%	4%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
20	5	4	3	3	2	2
30	6	4	3	3	3	2
40	6	4	4	3	3	3
50	6	5	4	3	3	3
60	6	4	4	3	3	3
70	6	4	3	3	3	2
80	5	4	3	3	2	2
90	4	3	2	2	2	2

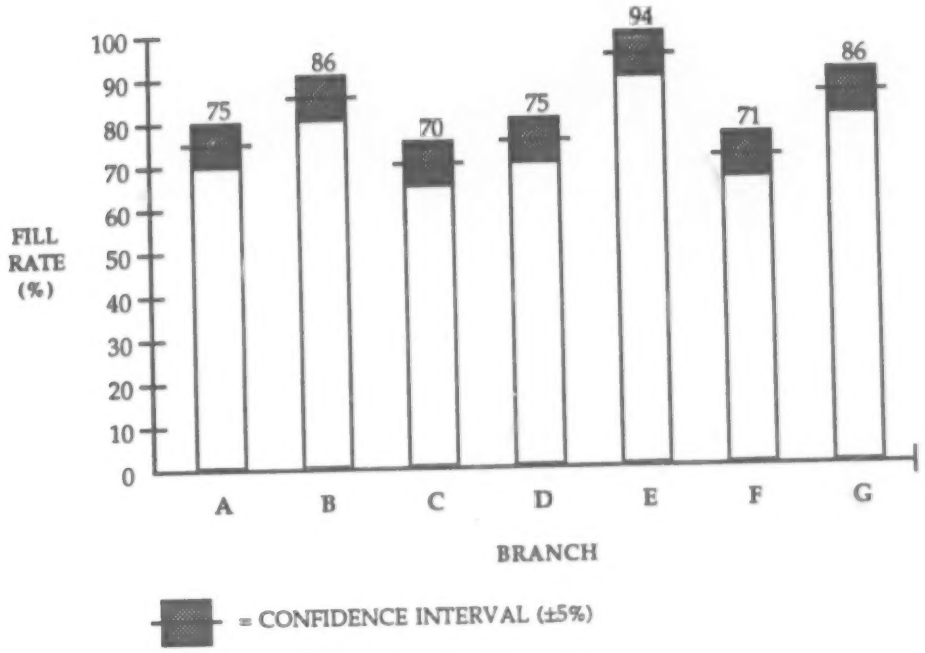
Note: Based on a 2-tailed test, 80% confidence level.

Example: A library with a sample of 300 and a **Title Fill Rate** of 60% has a margin of 4%. The confidence interval for its **Title Fill Rate** is 56% to 64%.

Confidence intervals are important because a simple **Fill Rate** may be misleading. For example, in Figure 2, Branch C's **Title Fill Rate** is 70 percent, so it appears that Branch C is not doing as well as Branch A. But actually the branch **Title Fill Rates** may be the same, because Branch A's **Title Fill Rate** confidence interval goes as low as 70 percent, and Branch C's goes as high as 75 percent. So they could actually be the same, somewhere in the range of 70 to 75 percent. The same would apply to a library that got a **Title Fill Rate** of 75 percent, plus or minus 5 percent, one year, and 70 percent, plus or minus 5 percent, the next. Service levels may not actually have changed from one year to the next.

The size of the margin depends on the size of the sample and the results obtained. *The smaller the sample, the greater is the possible margin in the estimate.* The next section tells you how to figure out what your margin is. The point is that the sample size only need be large enough to create a confidence interval that meets the library's needs: the less precision the library needs, the smaller the sample that will suffice.

Figure 2.
Comparing Confidence Intervals



The methods that follow are appropriate for **Title Fill Rate, Subject and Author Fill Rate, Browsers' Fill Rate,** and **Reference Completion Rate**. For simplicity, the term **Fill Rate** is used in the discussion below.

The first section below is for libraries that want the simplest approach. At a higher level of effort, the library can determine the precision of its estimate, that is, the width of its confidence interval, by adjusting its sample size. This is covered in the second section below, Calculating Sample Sizes.

Using the Suggested Sample Size

For the **Fill Rates**, this manual suggests *a sample size of 400 transactions for each of the measures*. If 400 transactions are more than the library can feasibly handle, the sample can be smaller, but *no smaller than 100 transactions*. That is, for **Title Fill Rate**, we recommend between 100 and 400 TITLES SOUGHT; for **Subject and Author Fill Rate**, between 100 and 400 SUBJECTS AND AUTHORS SOUGHT; between 100 and 400 BROWSERS for **Browsers' Fill Rate**; and between 100 and 400 REFERENCE TRANSACTIONS for **Reference Completion Rate**. These should be collected over a period of no more than two weeks. (For more on this, see the instructions for the Materials Availability Survey in Chapter 5.)

Remember that these sample sizes refer to usable transactions. One Materials Availability Survey form, for example, may contain more than one TITLES SOUGHT and SUBJECTS AND AUTHORS SOUGHT, and may or may not represent a BROWSER.

After collecting the data and calculating the **Fill Rate(s)** following the instructions in Chapter 5 of this manual, use Figure 1 to figure the confidence interval for each measure.*

To use Figure 1:

1. Find the sample size closest to yours across the top. Your sample size is the total number of transactions of this kind in your sample (e.g., TITLES SOUGHT, SUBJECTS AND AUTHORS SOUGHT, BROWSERS, or REFERENCE TRANSACTIONS). Your goal may have been 400 (or 100), but you may have ended up with more or fewer.

* Figure 1 is at an 80% level of confidence. This is lower than is customary for research, but probably adequate for management decision making. At this level of confidence, we can say that, in the long run, 80% of the confidence intervals obtained using this method will include the true (population) parameter.

2. Down the left size of the table, find the **Fill Rate** closest to yours.

3. The figure at the intersection of these two is your margin.

4. Your **Fill Rate** interval is between the figure that you calculated from your survey results PLUS your margin, and that same figure MINUS your margin.

   Example: A library's users report 200 TITLES SOUGHT. Sixty percent were filled. Using Figure 6, the margin for 200 at 60 percent is 4 percent. The true **Title Fill Rate** for this library is 60 percent plus or minus 4 percent, or between 56 and 64 percent. The confidence interval for this library's **Title Fill Rate** is 56 to 64 percent.

Calculating Sample Sizes

Calculating your own sample size is slightly more complex than using the suggested sample size. It is most appropriate for libraries that have used a measure before and want their estimate to fall within a specified range.

1. Estimate what the **Fill Rate** is likely to be (from previous years' data, from neighboring libraries, or from an informed guess).

2. Decide what size margin you need and find it in Figure 1 in the row with the expected Fill Rate.

   a. The size margin you need depends on how precise an estimate you need: is plus or minus 5 percentage points acceptable, or do you need plus or minus 3 percentage points?

3. The sample size at the top of that column is the target. (*Remember that these are usable transactions;* see the instructions for the Materials Availability Survey in Chapter 5 to translate this to MAS questionnaires.)

4. After the data have been collected and analyzed, it is likely that the final Fill Rate and/or sample size is not quite what you expected. Use the method under Using the Suggested Sample Size, above, to calculate the margin from the actual data.

   Example: The same library decides the next year to determine its own sample size. It expects its fill rate to go down to about 55 percent because its new materials budget was cut. It wants to bring its margin down to

plus or minus 3 percent. Using Figure 1, it needs 400 TITLES SOUGHT (between 50 and 60 percent fill rate, 3 percent margin).

A more precise estimate requires a progressively larger sample size. There is a direct trade–off between level of effort and precision.

Multiple Outlet Sample Sizes

In a library with branches, a decision must be made about the results needed:

1. One figure for each measure for the entire library taken together, or
2. A figure for each branch individually as well as the library as a whole.

Once this decision has been made, the data coordinator uses the discussion that follows to determine sample sizes.

For the measures for which the library counts transactions during the week, each outlet simply collects data for a week; how those data are combined to a system–level result is explained below under Data Analysis. For the **Fill Rates**, this decision affects the total sample size and how the sample is distributed among the branches.

Branch–level Results: Using the recommended sample sizes, each outlet should have a minimum of 100 transactions (400 is better). If you calculate your own sample size, use the method described above under Calculating Sample Sizes, repeating for each branch individually. To calculate the overall library–level measure from the branch samples, see, under Data Analysis below, Outlet and Library–level Data.

Overall Library–level Only: The sample size required for the library as a whole is either the recommended sample size (preferably 400 but at least 100), or is calculated using the methods described under Calculating Sample Sizes. *Then the sample is distributed among the branches according to their relative shares of total system activity* [*OMPL2* has a form on page 22 that may assist this calculation.]:

1. Use the previous year's circulation data to determine the percentage of system activity contributed by each branch.

   Example: Total ANNUAL CIRCULATION for the system was 100,000. The Main Library's circulation was 75,000, or 75 percent. Branch A's circulation was 25,000, or 25 percent.

2. Determine the sample size needed using either the recommended sample or the method above for calculating your own.

3. Multiply the sample size by the percent of circulation for each branch to determine how many transactions should come from each branch. This is the target sample size for each branch.

   Example: The library needs a sample of 400 to determine its **Title Fill Rate**. 300 TITLES SOUGHT (75 percent) should come from the Main Library, 100 from Branch A.

Simply distributing the sample equally among the branches, without correcting for activity level, would give smaller branches a disproportionate influence on overall results. Smaller branches contribute less to the total volume of system service and so should count proportionately less.

National Statistics on Public Library Service to Children: Why and How to Get Them

Mary Jo Lynch

So far, the institute has focused on measurement at the local library level. I know the topic of this institute is evaluation, which is different from measurement, but I also know that measurement usually comes first. You have to measure something—find out how long or high or heavy it is—before you can evaluate how good it will be for the purpose you have in mind. Since Joey Rodger will not be here, I'll recite for you the evaluator's cheer which I first heard from her: "2-4-6-8, measure; then evaluate!"

For many years I have been working to improve the measurement of all aspects of library service on the national level. In connection with those efforts, I've been wanting to talk to a group like this for a long time about national statistics on public library service to children. What national statistics you might ask? There aren't any, are there? You are right. There aren't. That's the problem I want to explore hoping that, together, we can seek a solution.

That topic may seem a little off target at this institute, but I believe it fits and adds an important dimension. Collecting data for regular reporting and for special evaluative studies at the local level is essential for effective management of children's service. But it isn't enough if we want to see public library service in general and service to children in particular recognized as an important part of American life. National statistics are needed to make that possible.

II. Background

Two things happened about five years ago to convince me that this was an issue that needed attention. The first was a call I received from Linda Silver who was chairing an ALSC committee charged with investigating what national statistics were available about public library children's services. I studied the statistical reports I

usually consult when I'm asked a questions about public library statistics and came up with nothing. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) didn't have anything in the sample survey reports they did every four years. The Allen County Public Library didn't have anything in the biennial data they published from public libraries serving populations of over 100,000, nor did the Urban Libraries Council in the biennial data they gathered from their members. We did find out about a few state–level reports and were able to locate, with the help of Herbert Goldhor at the University of Illinois, some large public libraries that included statistics on children's services as part of their regular annual reports. But there was nothing that would enable us to say: here are figures that describe public library service to children on the national level.

At about the same time, I read a book by economist Lawrence J. White entitled, *The Public Library in the 1980's: The Problems of Choice*. True to his training as an economist, White viewed the public library from a public policy perspective. He questioned the legitimacy of the public library's claim upon public funds and concluded that, although the public library was what economists call a "public good," and thus entitled to public monies, that claim was not strong enough to warrant full support from that source. He recommended, therefore, that public libraries begin to charge fees for many services.

I have problems with many of White's conclusions and recommendations, but am in complete agreement with what he has to say about public library service to children and about the need for national statistics about that service.

Chapter 9 of White's book is headed "The Special Problem of Service to Children and Students." The Chapter begins with the following quote from Margaret Edwards:

> Public libraries consider young people an interruption to business, yet they are the business, more so than the middle–aged adults the librarians are waiting for. (p. 97)

In an earlier chapter, White had presented statistics that showed public library circulation to children and students to be over half of the total. (The data were incomplete and not up to date, but White believed they supported his conclusion.) Yet most of the surveys of public library use focus on service to adults and service to adults is what public library directors emphasize. Those facts are very old news to this group. But Larry White puts them in a public policy perspective when he says:

> The implication of these criticisms is important to an assessment of the social value of the public library. Service to children and students comes closest to satisfying that library's goals of encouraging literacy and furthering education; as I will argue in chapter 11, the case for public provision of free library services is at its strongest when applied to children's and student's service. If the library's main focus is elsewhere, and if it is short-changing service to child and students, then the overall case for the free public library as it is presently constituted becomes weaker still. (p. 99)

The implications of White's comment are clear—public library advocates are missing the boat when they ignore or minimize service to children. White elaborates on this point in a later chapter when he explains the economic concept of "externalities." The point here is that although it may seem that in providing free public library service, government is favoring one group of citizens unfairly—the group who use libraries—there are benefits that flow to the whole community because of the service to a few. White explains that:

> In this context, then, the case for public library service to children and students appears to be very strong. Service to children encourages them to be more literate and to develop a greater appreciation for books and for the printed word. Public library services to students are an extension of their formal education. Making library services available at zero cost to these users encourages their use of the library and could be justified in the same way that free public education to children is justified. (p. 131)

White goes on to show that the case for external or spillover benefits to others in society is much less strong when applied to adult services. I have some problems with his analysis here, but fully accept his earlier conclusion—that service to children is very important from the public policy perspective.

White's final conclusions and recommendations bring joy to the heart of one who cares about library statistics. His first recommendation is that the federal government should collect comprehensive statistics annually from public libraries and his second recommendation is that we must have statistics about the use of public libraries by children and youth. White criticizes that National Center for Education Statistics for a haphazard approach to public library statistics, but he puts the primary blame on librarians. White says:

> This haphazard approach to statistics is not accidental. It is indicative of a profession that has not understood the value of statistics and, indeed, is fearful of their use. Both the practice and the attitude must change. To paraphrase the quotation from Lord Kelvin cited at the beginning of Chapter 3, if you haven't measured something, it's awfully hard to talk sensibly about it. (p. 161)

Let me give you the full quotation from Lord Kelvin:

> When you can measure what you are speaking about and express it in numbers you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind. (p. 15)

That's the situation we have been in for some time regarding public libraries in general and service to children in particular. Things are definitely looking up for general public library statistics (some exemplary projects are outlined in Section III). Statistics on service to children however, are not doing as well. I hope this group can do something about that.

III. The Federal–State Cooperative System

I want to highlight a series of projects I began working on shortly after my encounter with Larry White. The first project was entitled "Analysis of Library Data Collection and Development of Plans for the Future." That project involved examination of the statistics collected by NCES from various types of libraries and the programs of any other agencies collecting library statistics especially at the state level. The document included recommendations for future action by NCES and prepared model questionnaires for NCES to use with each types of library. A summary of the final report on the project appeared in the *Bowker Annual* for 1985.

A key component of the project was a detailed analysis of the forms used by states to collect data from libraries. The three-volume appendix to the report contained charts that show every item collected by any state and all states that collect the item. Two of the three volumes report on public library statistics—a total of 377 pages. Clearly there was a lot of variety in state data collection from public libraries in 1983-84! We found that all fifty state library agencies collected statistics annually from public libraries in their states. The general topics they collected data on were similar, but the specific items were not and therefore the results were not comparable from state to state. The report recommended that NCES persuade the states to collect a limited set of key items in a standard way and report them to NCES so that national summaries could be created. Before that report was submitted, the idea was presented to the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) which supported it in principle.

Did the states collect statistics about service to children? The answer: some did, but not much. My article about this in the Winter, 1985 issue of *Top of the News* reported that:

> Twenty-four states included an item on circulation of materials to youth, but the language varied. Some states asked about "juvenile circulation"; some included a question under the heading "Circulation" for "Books—juvenile" or for "Fiction—juvenile" and "Non-fiction—juvenile"; some asked about circulation of "Printed materials—juvenile".... Twelve states asked about number of programs and/or number of attendees for "juvenile programs."

The March 1984 final report recommended that at least one item be collected nationally from public libraries—circulation of juvenile materials.

Shortly after the November 1984 report was filed, ALA sent a proposal to the Department of Education asking for funds to conduct a pilot project that would work with a small group of states (five to seven was suggested) to explore the feasibility of a system that would coordinate the annual collection of data from public libraries in the fifty states with the periodic reporting of national statistics on public libraries by NCES.

Two units of the Department of Education provided financial support for the project—Library Programs and NCES. In October 1985 the project began and a letter went out immediately to all fifty chief officers of the state library agencies inviting them to participate in the pilot. Twenty states volunteered. When the Advisory Committee met in November 1985 they decided to accept everyone who volunteered and to rearrange the project to allow it. By the time the project ended, there were fifteen official participants: California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

States were free to collect whatever they wanted as long as they collected a certain set of items using standard definitions and sent data on those items to NCES for incorporation into a national report. States could continue collecting data at whatever time of the year was best for them. This would mean that any aggregate report would contain data collected at different times but sent to NCES at a standard time. The Advisory Committee spent a good bit of time at their first meeting revising the list of items and definitions that had been recommended in the report of the previous project. Those items and definitions were to be revised two more times before the pilot project was finished! The question about circulation of children's materials stayed on the list through the first two revisions but was finally dropped because many participating states complained that most libraries could not supply the figures.

The pilot project took two years to complete. During that time there was a workshop for participating states and a lot of communication and coordination regarding a key component of the project—data were to be sent from the states to NCES in machine-readable form.

At the time of the March 1986 workshop only four states knew they could send data to CES in machine-readable form—two on magnetic tape produced from a mainframe and two on floppies from a microcomputer. By the time the project was finished all were able to do so, albeit with different levels of skill and ease. Twelve of the fifteen pilot states sent 1986 data to NCES by the time the pilot project ended and the other three did so soon after that.

The pilot project was officially completed at the end of August 1987 when a final report was submitted. That report recommended that work begin immediately to expand the pilot project into a 50–state system. By that time a library statistics coordinator had been appointed at NCES and had begun to put the data from pilot project states onto the NCES mainframe and analyze it. Both the final report on the pilot and that appointment coincided with a renewed interest in library statistics at NCES, due to the discussion of HR5 which eventually became Public Law 100-297 (the Hawkins–Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Act). This law gave NCES greater authority and responsibility, and specifically charged NCES to collect statistics about libraries. The need for a federal–state cooperative system for public library data is specifically mentioned in the law.

In February 1988, a "Memorandum of Understanding" was signed between NCES and the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) whereby NCLIS would coordinate the work of a Task Force established to plan the expansion of the pilot project into a 50–state system. That Task Force met monthly from March through September 1988 and developed a plan for the Federal–State Cooperative System for Public Library Data Collection (FSCS). One key component of the plan is that the pilot project's list of eighty–one items was reduced to forty–one. The other basic ideas remain the same, however.

Implementation of the plan began immediately with a workshop in Annapolis on December 5-8 for state data coordinators. Forty–eight states and the District of Columbia sent a representative to the Annapolis meeting where they learned what would be required of participants and what help would be available from NCES and NCLIS.

As of May 1, 1989, forty states were expected to submit their most recent data to NCES in July 1989. There will undoubtedly be some problems with the forty and there is much work to do to increase forty to fifty. But it seems very likely that FSCS will exist very soon. Plans are also underway to change the agency linking states to NCES from NCLIS, where that work is done now, to COSLA, the Chief Officers of the State Library Agencies.

IV. Adding to PSCS

Will there by anything in PSCS on service to children? Not unless something is done to change current plans. I've told you the long story about how PSCS was developed because understanding that history is the key to instigating the change that is needed. It seems to me that several steps are essential if leaders in public library service to children are to be successful in getting statistics about that service incorporated in PSCS.

1. Decide what data elements you want and how they are to be defined.
2. Work at the local level to get librarians to collect the data.
3. Work at the state level to get state library agencies to collect the data.
4. Communicate with those responsible for PSCS regarding your intentions and your program.

There is sympathy among those developing PSCS for including something about children's services but we were stopped by three factors:

1. States told us they could not get data from libraries, even on something that seems simple like circulation of children's materials.

2. There is a minor dispute about the validity of using circulation of children's materials as a measure of service to children since children take out other materials and those who are not children take out materials designed for children.

3. There is a major dispute about the age at which a person stops being a child and starts being a young adult.

Leaders in the community of children's library service need to reach a reasonable consensus on those issues first and then convince other practitioners to collect data. Then you can approach state library officials about incorporating data items into state forms and eventually into national reporting. It can't happen tomorrow or even next year, but it can happen.

Two models come to mind as I think about how to do this. One is what I call the California model. Neel Parikh of the San Francisco Public Library, representing the Children's Services Management Consortium, asked the California State Library to collect more statistics about children's services on their annual survey. Before doing so, the Consortium polled their member libraries about what data they could supply easily. Armed with that evidence, the Consortium convinced State Librarian Gary Strong that questions should be added to the California form about programming for children and expenditure for children's materials in addition to a question on circulation.

A second model I would like to offer comes from the reference service area. Many years ago, the Committee on Reference Statistics of the Library Administration and Management Association's Statistics Second became convinced that a count of reference questions ought to be part of the periodic surveys that NCES conducted of public libraries and academic libraries. So they worked out definitions that separated substantive "reference questions" from "directional questions" (i.e., Where is the bathroom, the photocopier, the pencil sharpener). It took a while to get the language right and to convince reference librarians to collect the data. But the committee kept at it and was successful in getting their definitions used in state and national statistical surveys. We are not out of the woods yet on that one as national statistics on reference service in public libraries are incomplete at this time. But questions on reference are in FSCS. So the situation should improve soon. The same cannot be said of national statistics on children's service—yet.

You may wonder why I have talked at great length about FSCS—the Federal State Cooperative System—and said nothing about PLDS—PLA's Public Library Data Service. PLDS and FSCS are very similar in that they both collect basic data annually from public libraries—data that describe staff and collection and budget and services. They are also very different in several ways. Two differences assume special importance in the present context.

1. When FSCS is complete in a couple of years, it will report on all public libraries in the U.S. PLDS focuses on public libraries serving populations of over

100,000. Since less than five percent of the public libraries in the U.S. serve populations of that size, PLDS is of less importance from a broad public policy perspective. The libraries in that five percent do serve the largest population centers, but public policy is concerned with everyone.

2. PLDS was started by a PLA committee and is now advised by a PLA committee. The process of introducing an item on children's service into the PLDS questionnaire is much less complex than introducing a new item into FSCS which has been and will be shaped by the fifty states.

My advice on how to do it is similar to my advice on how to get an item into FSCS. It should be easier to get into PLDS, however, because there is less bureaucracy involved and because there are fewer libraries involved.

Why am I so concerned about this? Because I believe with Larry White that from a public policy perspective service to children is an essential part of public library service. However, it is currently invisible at the national level. When people call my office for statistics about public library service to children, I can't give them much. And, I am haunted by a quip some professor made one day in a political science class:

"If you can't count it, it doesn't count."

That offends my humanistic soul, but I'm afraid it's true when you're dealing with politicians and economists and journalists. Since we know children's services do count, we need to make the numbers available in order to convince others. Of course measurement isn't evaluation but it is something.

I'll risk your not already having heard Peter Drucker's argument for using quantitative surrogates for qualitative achievements. The example Drucker uses to illustrate his point is one that could easily be adapted to the library situation. Drucker notes that a minister cannot measure the number of souls saved, but it is possible to count how many people come to service regularly. Librarians who dismiss the importance of statistics because they don't tell everything about services to children are missing an opportunity to use statistics creatively as surrogates for more important things.

V. National Statistics Now

Before I close let me mention two shining lights in the darkness surrounding public library children's services. One is a statistic that has been published annually for years. The second is a national survey that was conducted this winter.

The annual statistic was developed many years ago by Herbert Goldhor of the University of Illinois. Goldhor used techniques designed by economists to create the "Index of public library circulation" and the "Index of public library expenditure." Both are reported for 1986 in the *American Libraries* article that was photocopied for distribution at this meeting. Notice every year is expressed in comparison to 1980 which is expressed as 100.

Since circulation is separated into adult and children this index gives us real evidence of the growth of circulation of children's materials. It's the first piece of evidence I quote when someone calls wanting to know whether children are using libraries less today because of television or because of illiteracy. I too find the index surprising in view of those factors but I checked the numbers with Susan Roman and she tells me they correspond with what she hears from the field. The Illinois index is not widely known but it should be. Were local libraries to keep statistics on circulation of children's materials, those figures compared to this national index would illumine how a local library compares to the national average.

The second light in the darkness promises to be even brighter. The Fast Response Survey System of NCES (FRSS), established in 1975, is designed to collect small amounts of issue-oriented data for educational planning and policy. It does this quickly and with minimum burden on respondents. FRSS is available to policy analysts, planners, and decision makers in the Department of Education.

Ray Fry of the Library Programs unit has been successful in persuading NCES to do a fast response survey on public library service to young adults in 1987 and results were published in 1988. In the Spring, 1989 issue of *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* an article by Mary K. Chelton describes the questionnaire design process and comments on the results.

When several of us learned about the Young Adult survey, we decided to ask for a similar survey on public library service to children. I wrote to NCES, after conferring with ALSC, PLA, and NCLIS. NCES agreed and Ray Fry again acted as a link between NCES and the library community. Susan Roman and I served on the committee that advised on the survey. Also serving were Mary Somerville, Maggie Kimmel, Barbara Immroth, and Jane Botham. We worked very hard but we didn't get everything we wanted. The length of the questionnaire is constrained by FRSS procedures and some of our suggestions on wording could not be implemented. In general, we are pleased and look forward to the results which should be available before the end of 1989. This will be the first national data **ever** on public library service to children. It will be great to have now in the Year of the Young Reader as libraries join the First Lady in a campaign for family literacy. The survey data will furnish a base to build on in the future. I look forward to working with you to do that.

VI. California Raisins

You are the first librarians outside of ALA headquarters to hear about some other data that will be available this fall related to children and literacy. Several months ago, I got a call from someone at a New York public relations firm wanting statistics on public and school libraries—how many there were, did children use them, was circulation up or down. I was very busy that day but the caller was pleasant and persistent and told me she was working on the California Raisins account. I was amused by the dancing raisins so I spent more time than I usually do with commercial callers. After doing what I could, I referred her to AASL for more detail on schools, and thought no more about it. Several weeks ago I got a letter on California Raisins Advisory Board letterhead asking if ALA would cooperate with them on a project that involved:

1. interviews with kids regarding attitudes toward reading;

2. enrolling kids in a "raisin reading" club and giving them prizes when they had read a certain number of books.

The California Raisins Advisory Board wanted to do something to promote literacy and needed ALA's help on both components. I turned the matter over to PIO [Public Information Office], ALSC, AASL, and OLOS [Office for Library Outreach Services]

and things are moving fast: PIO is working with them on materials and arranging an appearance of the dancing raisins at the Annual Conference in Dallas.

The interviews will be done this summer by a Chicago firm that specializes in interviews with children. They will do "mall intercept" interviews with fifty to sixty children between the ages of 6 and 11 in each of ten large cities. Children visiting malls with parents will be asked a series of attitudinal questions. I don't have the draft questions yet but once we get them I could really use some advice from people attending this institute who have expertise in interviewing children. This is a wonderful opportunity to influence research being done on someone else's nickel.

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Output Measures for Children's Services in Wisconsin Public Libraries

Douglas L. Zweizig, Joan A. Braune, and Gloria A. Waity

Excerpted from a publication of the
School of Library and Information Studies,
University of Wisconsin—Madison.

Project Description

This report is the result of a pilot study of the use of output measures for measuring children's services in Wisconsin public libraries which took place in March–April, 1985.

This project is part of a long-term effort on the part of Wisconsin children's librarians to improve the measurement and planning of services. In 1979, children's librarians conducted a two-day review and discussion of services. In 1981, a statewide survey of children's librarians identified the need for improved administrative and management skills. In February, 1984, a group of 24 Wisconsin children's and young adult librarians met again to discuss services. This group was especially concerned about gathering data which would be useful in documenting efforts to improve services. Members had heard about output measures, and they wanted to know more about them so they instructed the state outreach consultant to write an LSCA (Library Services and Construction Act) grant application which would provide them with a continuing education experience to learn about output measures and also the opportunity to test the measures with children. The grant was written, awarded, and implemented during FY 1985.

The staff consisted of Gloria A. Waity, Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) Outreach Consultant and Project Administrator; Joan A. Braune, Project Coordinator; and Douglas L. Zweizig, Project Consultant. Waity wrote the grant application and was responsible for administration and coordination with the

children's librarians. Braune was responsible for the organization of the meetings, preparation of project materials, and project communications. Zweizig provided training and consultation at the three meetings and is the author of the draft manual that was tested and of this report. The measures themselves were conducted by the librarians listed in the Acknowledgements. They represent libraries from almost every one of the 17 regional library systems in Wisconsin. The project staff members functioned as organizers and educators, but the project itself belonged to the librarians. The staff consulted with them, but group decisions as to what measures would be implemented, what definitions would be used, and other such decisions were made by the librarians. Because of the group decision-making and because this was not a project or an activity imposed upon them by an outside authority, a strong sense of ownership of the adapted measures and the statistics which composed the data occurred.

Decisions on what to measure and how to measure it were made during the group meetings. Three were scheduled as part of the project, but any group wishing to replicate the experience would be wise to plan four sessions. At the first meeting, philosophical discussions of the purposes of children's services, questions about the key indicators of service, and doubts about the feasibility of measurement were aired. Because people had not actually participated in such data collection, there was a need for theoretical background and explanation which was provided by Zweizig. It was necessary for the group to look at and reach consensus on terminology and service questions. Considerable discussion about the use by adults of children's materials and services occurred in examining each measure. It reflected the knowledge that children's librarians serve children both directly and indirectly through service to parents and other adults.

At the second meeting, methodology was emphasized as proposed adaptations were discussed. The measures were then performed in 20 libraries, using a draft manual of adaptations of measures prepared by Zweizig. In addition to reporting results of the measurement, librarians were asked to report on the experience of obtaining each data element and overall reactions to the data collection process. These reports were used by Zweizig to identify problems and to propose solutions. At the third meeting, the data were presented, and discussion and recommendations for changes in the data collection

forms occurred. In some cases, individual libraries collected the data as the group had decided, but with slight additions so that they could be interpreted for the group study and also in a way which reflected the individual library's needs. Their ability to do this supports the adaptability of the output measures methodology and the usefulness of the forms used. There was not enough time in the third meeting to thoroughly discuss the data and to draw conclusions about what the information told libraries, individually and collectively, about the state of children's services. For this reason, it is recommended that a fourth meeting of participants would be important.

This is a progress report. The data included should be viewed as results of the process, not as base–line data, although those Wisconsin libraries repeating the collection will be able to use it to build on and for comparison. But because this is a testing experience—to see how the forms adapted for children's services really worked, to see how the librarians and their staffs used the forms and the experience, and to see how children respond to such data gathering—some changes in the final product have been recommended and incorporated in the body of this report.

The children's librarians who participated in this test project have indicated an extremely positive response to this process. Many of them have plans to repeat the process. It is too early in the process and data from a single measurement period are too limited to come to conclusions about children's services in Wisconsin. However, on the basis of the enthusiasm for this method of collection expressed by the participants, it is hoped that in 1986 systematic collection of data for children's services will begin.

Introduction to the Manual

This document is both a report of a test of adaptations of *Output Measures for Public Libraries* for the measurement of children's services and a manual for children's librarians to use for future data collection. The appropriateness of the measurement procedures in the manual is the result of the field testing by and recommendations of the children's librarians in Wisconsin.

The material in this manual is intended to supplement the OMPL manual, *Output Measures for Public Libraries; A Manual of Standardized Procedures* (Douglas Zweizig and Eleanor Jo Rodger; Chicago, American Library Association, 1982). The numbers of the measures and the page numbers references in this publication are to that manual. The OMPL manual should be consulted for fuller explanation of each of the data collection procedures.*

Output measures are standardized indicators of the services a public library provides to its community. In order to aid comparison among libraries and across time, they are expressed as ratios to adjust, for example, for different sizes of populations served. The figures which form the output measures ratios are referred to as data elements. **Juvenile circulation per juvenile capita**, for instance, is made up of the data elements of **Annual circulation of juvenile materials** and **Juvenile population** in the jurisdiction served. The data collection procedures in this manual are for the collection of the data elements. The resulting output measure is produced by dividing one data element by another.

The determination of definitions for measures of services involves many compromises, and many difficult definition problems remain. Probably the most problematic is that of the population served. Even though libraries receive the greater part of their support from a locality, a significant proportion of their service may be to residents of nearby communities or unincorporated areas. The considerations that resulted in the use of the population of the primary jurisdiction as the data element were that this figure would be used for other municipal services, that it was the figure most meaningful for the primary funders, and that it was the most unambiguous of the definitions considered. The addition of a percentage of the service that is to non-residents (in Table 2) aids in the interpretation of the per capita measures.

* See also:Nancy Van House *et al. Output Measures for Public Libraries; A Manual of Standardized Procedures, Second edition*. Chicago: ALA, 1987.

In order for data to be interpreted, they must have a basis for comparison: last year's data, the target level set in the library's objectives, or the like. Next year, when this data collection is repeated, librarians will be able to observe the directions in which the measures are moving. At this time, the only comparison set of data available is from a national gathering of output measures reported in 1983.[1] In the comments on the measures from this project, these national data for total libraries (in contrast to data for children's services) are used to provide some context for interpretation.

The librarians who participated in this project moved from an initial uncertainty about the feasibility and usefulness of the output measures process to an enthusiasm tempered by experience with the complexities of measurement. They asked that a quotation from an English judge on the quality of statistics from India be included in this report:

> The government are very keen on amassing statistics. They collect them, add them, raise them to the nth power, take the cube root, and prepare wonderful diagrams. But you must never forget that every one of these figures comes in the first instance from the village watchman, who just puts down what he damn pleases.

[1] Douglas L. Zweizig, "Any Number Can Play; The First National Report of Output Measures Data," *Public Libraries*, 24: Summer, 1985, 50–53.

Measures Used in this Project

Measure 1: JUVENILE CIRCULATION PER JUVENILE CAPITA:

Annual Circulation of Juvenile Materials divided by **Juvenile Population.**

Measure 2: IN-LIBRARY USE OF JUVENILE MATERIALS PER JUVENILE CAPITA:

Annual in-library use of Juvenile Materials divided by **Juvenile Population.**

Measure 3: JUVENILE LIBRARY VISITS PER JUVENILE CAPITA:

Annual Number of Juvenile Library Visits divided by **Juvenile Population.**

Measure 4: ANNUAL JUVENILE PROGRAM ATTENDANCE PER JUVENILE CAPITA:

Annual Juvenile Program Attendance divided by **Juvenile Population.**

Measure 6: REFERENCE FILL RATE FOR JUVENILES:

Number of Reference Transactions Completed for Juveniles divided by **Number of Reference Transactions for Juveniles.**

Measure 10: LIBRARY REGISTRATION OF JUVENILES AS A PERCENTAGE OF JUVENILE POPULATION:

Library Registration of Juveniles divided by **Juvenile Population.**

Measure 11: TURNOVER RATE OF JUVENILE MATERIALS:

Annual Circulation of Juvenile Materials divided by **Holdings of Juvenile Materials.**

Why measure children's services separately? A public library, though a single institution, is a complex of services for clientele with differing needs. Lowell Martin enumerated seven quite distinct roles played by public libraries: The People's University, the student's auxiliary, the children's door to reading, the free bookstore, the information agency, the scholar's workshop, and the community center. Measures of the output of the library as a whole can give only a general sense of the contribution of the library and cannot provide the management information that will allow the library to determine its effectiveness in the roles it chooses to emphasize. The output measures manual included Second Level measures for those libraries that wished to go beyond the general, initial measures. Many of the Second Level measures involved looking separately at services to children.

Why are the services provided during the summer months being ignored in this project? There is no question that the pattern of children's services is different during the summer months. In order to have a full sense of children's services, a separate study of output measures during the summer would be required. This project is an exploration of the feasibility of adapting output measures to children's services. After the measures are tried this spring and revised, those measures that have been successful may be used in the summer in a continuation of the project.

What are the advantages of sampling? How do we know that sampling provides better information than counting everything? Most books on sampling tell how to sample and neglect to say why. Morris James Slonim's *Sampling; a quick, reliable guide to practical statistics* (N.Y., Simon and Schuster, 1960 [originally published as *Sampling in a nutshell*]) continues to be used as a commonsense explanation of both the why and the how:

> A natural and legitimate question that many readers will ask is, "What advantages does a sample possess over a complete count?" The answer in brief is that sampling often permits the executive to cut costs, reduce manpower requirements, gather vital information more quickly, obtain data that could not possibly be available otherwise, obtain more comprehensive data, and actually increase the accuracy of his figures in some instances. In addition, some sampling methods make it possible to measure the reliability of the sample estimates from the sample itself.... [p.3] Anyone who is of the notion that 100 per cent count automatically provides the true figure should try counting and re-counting a heap of boiled peas the size of a dunce cap until he gets the same total twice. [p. 14]

If you're intrigued by this question, you may want to locate a copy of Slonim's book.

A Note on Sample Sizes

The numbers indicated in the manual for sample sizes have been based on the assumption that the samples will be drawn from a large number of items: in sampling items requested for document delivery, we have assumed that a large number of items are requested; in sampling titles sought for title availability, we have assumed that a large number of titles are sought each year; and so on. If your library is small, you may be able to reduce the number required in the sample. To decide whether this is possible, you first need to think about the data element being collected, and answer the following questions:

- Regarding in–library materials use:
  Are less than 2,000 items used in my library each year? ___ Yes ___ No
- Regarding annual number of library visits:
  Did the library have less than 2,000 visits last year? ___ Yes ___ No
- Regarding annual number of reference transactions:
  Did we have less than 2,000 reference transactions last year? ___ Yes ___ No
- Regarding annual number of titles sought:
  Did users seek less than 2,000 specific items (known titles) last year? ___ Yes ___ No
- Regarding annual number of subjects and authors sought:
  Did users seek less than 2,000 specific subjects or authors last year? ___ Yes ___ No
- Regarding annual number of browsers:
  Did less than 2,000 users browse last year? ___ Yes ___ No
- Regarding annual requests for materials not immediately available:
  Were less than 2,000 items not immediately available requested last year? ___ Yes ___ No

For each of these questions, it's o.k. to make a guess. For example, if you're open 300 days in a year, you might ask, "Is it likely that on an average day less than seven items were used in the library?"

For any of the above questions to which you answered "No," the sample size should be the one recommended in the manual, generally a minimum sample of 100 items. For any of the above questions to which you answered "Yes," you can reduce the sample size

for that data element depending on how much below 2,000 you think your number is, as follows:

Number of Items Estimated	Number of Items Needed in Sample
2,000	95
1,000	90
500	80
250	60

For example, the library that estimates that about 1,000 items were used in the library last year would only need a sample of 90 items in the in-library materials use study.

Suggested Order for Gathering Output Measures Data

Most libraries have said that they plan to collect the data in a one-week period. If the data could be gathered in several phases, some confusion and overload of the staff might be avoided. A pattern has been suggested below. The pattern can be modified in order to best meet your needs and schedule.

Phase 1 (Preparation):

Inform staff and others involved (Board? volunteers?) of the output measures process you'll be using and the schedule.

Arrange for duplication of needed forms.

Record data elements already known or easily obtained:
- juvenile population
- holdings of juvenile materials
- library registration of juveniles
- annual juvenile program attendance

Phase 2 (First data collection):

Conduct circulation study

Conduct in-library materials use study

Phase 3 (Second data collection):

Conduct reference study (for Reference Fill Rates for Juveniles)

Conduct study of library visits

Example procedures and data report

Measure 2: In–library use of Juvenile Materials per Juvenile Capita:

FORMULA: In–library use of Juvenile Materials divided by **Juvenile Population.**

DEFINITIONS:

OUTPUT MEASURE: *In–library use of Juvenile Materials per Juvenile Capita* reports the estimated annual number of juvenile materials used by patrons in the library, divided by the **Juvenile Population.**

DATA ELEMENT: **In–library use of Juvenile Materials** is the number of all materials classified or marked as "juvenile" that are removed from their shelf locations by either staff or users for use within the library.

COLLECTING THE DATA ELEMENTS:

In–library use of Juvenile Materials: During a sample week, the procedure involves counting the number of juvenile materials that are to be replaced on shelves or in files, excluding those returned from outside circulation (See In–Library Materials Use Log on OMPL p. 18.). If juvenile materials are shelved in a separate location, the procedures in the OMPL manual may be used. If juvenile materials are inter–shelved and are identifiable, the modified IN–LIBRARY MATERIALS USE LOG provided in this publication should be used. The modified IN–LIBRARY MATERIALS USE LOG allows for an in–library materials use study for the entire library, with a separate count of juvenile and non–juvenile materials.

Some libraries observed that patrons were inhibited by the survey and removed fewer materials than they would have without the survey or that patrons reshelved materials in spite of the survey. Some suggestions were that the library could put laundry baskets at strategic places in the library for the deposit of examined items, the SURVEY ALERT POSTER in this publication could be used or adapted, or volunteer "greeters" could explain the survey to patrons as they enter the library or children's room.

IN-LIBRARY MATERIALS USE LOG

OMLCS

(Number of Items)

LIBRARY_____ DATE__/__/__

SHEET #_____

HOUR		:00	:00	:00	:00	:00	:00	:00	:00	TOTALS
BOOKS	JUVENILE									
	NON-JUVENILE									
MAGAZINES	JUVENILE									
	NON-JUVENILE									
PAMPHLET FILES	JUVENILE									
	NON-JUVENILE									
SOUND RECORDINGS	JUVENILE									
	NON-JUVENILE									
NEWSPAPERS	JUVENILE									
	NON-JUVENILE									
CONTROLLED MATERIALS	JUVENILE									
	NON-JUVENILE									
OTHER	JUVENILE									
	NON-JUVENILE									
TOTALS	JUVENILE									
	NON-JUVENILE									
	TOTAL									

IN-LIBRARY MATERIALS USE LOG

219

SURVEY ALERT

PLEASE!

USE THE BOOKS, BUT...

DO NOT PUT THEM BACK TODAY!

Thanks.

Table 2.

In–library use of Juvenile Materials per Juvenile Capita

LIBRARY	% NON–RES.	SCORE
S		1.54
G	22%	1.91
M		2.08
L		2.13
P		2.75
O		5.19
K		5.76
Q	2%	7.54
H		7.65
N	10%	8.34
T		8.60
I		9.24
J		10.81
B		12.07
E		16.47
R	11%	21.78
A	13%	29.05
D		33.82
C	51%	57.83
F		
MINIMUM		1.54
MEDIAN		8.34
MAXIMUM		57.83
COUNT		19
AVERAGE		12.87

Measure 11: Turnover Rate of Juvenile Materials:

FORMULA: Annual Circulation of Juvenile Materials divided by **Holdings of Juvenile Materials.**

DEFINITIONS:

OUTPUT MEASURE: *Turnover Rate of Juvenile Materials* measures the activity level of the library's juvenile collection. It indicates the number of times each item of juvenile library material would have circulated during the year if circulation had been spread evenly throughout the juvenile collection.

DATA ELEMENT: **Holdings of Juvenile Materials** is the number of cataloged items (not number of titles), plus paperback holdings even if uncataloged, that are classified or marked as "juvenile."

COLLECTING THE DATA ELEMENTS:

The definition of this set of library materials will differ from library to library. Methods for defining juvenile materials may include using those materials shelved separately for service to juveniles, using those materials labeled as juvenile materials, or making an estimation based on the proportion of materials ordered to serve the juvenile population.

Table 7.

Turnover Rate of Juvenile Materials

LIBRARY	SCORE
M	1.13
C	1.67
O	1.92
S	2.18
D	2.23
K	2.54
P	2.58
F	2.93
Q	3.35
N	3.42
A	3.62
L	3.75
G	3.80
B	3.81
T	3.90
H	4.20
I	4.32
R	4.87
J	4.97
E	
MINIMUM	1.13
MEDIAN	3.42
MAXIMUM	4.97
COUNT	19
AVERAGE	3.22

Observations on the Data Collection Experience

- We had fun during the in–library materials use week. It brought a great deal of attention to an area neglected by staff and public alike.

- All in all, our staff was supportive and conscientious.

- "Collecting the data during the sample week has led us to be more observant of patrons and how they use library materials."

- "We enjoyed doing the output measures and feel our board of trustees will be interested in the results, particularly in–library use of materials and library visits."

- "I enjoyed the experience! By doing this study, I was made more aware of the statistics that need to be kept and am already thinking of ways to use these figures. I feel that you really have to go through the procedure once before you are ready to ask intelligent questions."

- "We gained a more practical political outlook on statistics. We gained insight into how we could cut our daily record keeping while gaining more accurate and useful statistics on a twice–yearly basis."

- "From the data collected, we could also calculate measure #5 from the manual: Juvenile Reference Transactions/Juvenile capita = 0.32."

- "Think that doing it again would go easier as patrons would begin to think 'Oh, that again' and know better what to do."

- "It was a lot less painful than I thought it would be. I found the data collection well worth the effort. Based on the output measures figures I have obtained, I'm motivated to set up some measurable objectives or goals for the next year and am eager to perform output measures a year from now to see how things have changed."

Managing Children's Library Collections Through Objective Data

Craighton Hippenhammer

Top of the News, Spring 1986, p. 309-313.

Most librarians who serve children enjoy selecting materials. They expend considerable effort at perfecting their selection skills because they want their library collections to have the richest, choicest, and most useful resources for their young patrons. But excellent collections do not develop through good selection alone and will never happen without effective collection management.

The main collection management tool currently available to children's librarians is the recommended list. Lists can be a helpful double check of one's own expertise and currency; those published by knowledgeable practitioners and academicians are invaluable for checking the quality of one's collection and to insure that important titles are represented. But lists cannot tell librarians whether the listed materials should be in their particular collections. Children's collections must be analyzed as a whole to assess whether they are meeting the needs of the patrons they serve and following the goals and policies of the institutions to which they belong.

Ways of conducting comprehensive collection evaluations are now being developed within the profession. Most involve the gathering of statistical data; it is the monumental clerical task that this presumes that boggles the minds of collection managers. While computer help looms on the horizon for some, there are still techniques such as sampling and periodic measurement that librarians with nonautomated collections can learn to simplify the task.

Library directors are finding it valuable in financially difficult times to be able to show objective, verifiable facts to prove to their funders fiscal accountability and documented results. Many of them are excited about ways of measuring statistical data called *output measures* that may help them in documenting results. Children's librarians may wonder what's in it for them except for the threat of additional pressure to produce more than ever—more programs per staff hour, more reference questions answered, etc. The answer is this: output measures can give children's librarians additional information to help them to get better control of their collections and to make better selection and weeding decisions. Finding new ways to examine one's children's library collection via statistical comparisons invariably proves to be fascinating to the professional because of the new insights it makes possible.

Circulation Statistics

The most widely known and widely kept output data are circulation statistics. Circulation figures, in a rough sort of way, reflect library policies and the activities of librarians. Wise collection building, consistent, high quality public relations, and effective readers' advisory usually have a positive effect on circulation. But changes in demographics, community–organization activities, patron interests and habit patterns, or even the weather can also affect it. So while there are some circulation–influencing factors that librarians can affect, there are others that prove more difficult or impossible to control.

Even so, circulation statistics can prove useful to the collection manager, especially when compared to other data or to changes over time. To be the most helpful in collection management, circulation statistics should be kept by collection section, i.e., separate data for picture books, fiction, nonfiction classifications (perhaps by Dewey hundreds but better yet by Dewey tens), type of media, etc. This makes it possible to examine the collection in finer detail and to draw conclusions about specific collection areas. For example, here are some situations that objective data comparisons might uncover:

Comparing Circulation Year to Year

Circulation has increased over the years in all sections except for the 500s. Why? Fiction circulation decreased under the last children's librarian but has been increasing under the current one. Is the current one doing something right?

Comparing Circulation to Patrons Served

If circulation is decreasing slightly but the child population is decreasing significantly, the circulation rate per patron is increasing. This is a useful statistic if there ever was one. Perhaps the preschool population is increasing but picture–book circulation is decreasing. Why? If the circulation of children's books remains the same while circulation of adult books increases, are children checking out more adult books? If so, why?

Comparing Circulation to Number of Materials Owned

Also known as turnover rate, this figure will be different for each collection section. Comparing turnover rates within a section yields helpful information. For example, if one's picture–book section's average turnover rate is nine circulations per picture–book volume per year and title X circulates an average of only once a year, then unless aimed at the special reader, title X is either a candidate for weeding or for resurrection via book talks or story hours. Comparing turnover rates between sections will at times also prove valuable. Picture–book section turnover rates can be expected to be two to four times that of the juvenile fiction section. If the picture–book section turnover rate is ten times that of the fiction section, it would seem wise for the juvenile collection manager to either increase the size of the picture–book section or to decrease the size of the fiction section.

Measuring in–house use of materials may prove useful for some libraries. This is especially true of collections where reference materials get heavy use or in children's rooms that hold materials for projects that several classes or other groups must use in the library.

Availability Statistics

Another method for evaluating collections is measuring the availability of materials. One way to measure the availability of materials is through survey interviews. Patrons are asked upon exiting the library whether or not they found the subjects or titles for which they came. The percentages of yes answers are known as *fill rates.*[1]

The patron–interviewing technique, unfortunately, measures too much. It confuses and confounds measurements of collection performance and patron response to the collection. Not only does the fill rate measure whether the material is actually in the collection, but it also measures patrons' abilities to find materials on their own, their abilities to find materials with the help of a librarian, ease of access (library architectural impediments and collection arrangement peculiarities) and the level of staff helpfulness. All of these factors are measured together and cannot be separated.

Many subjective factors weaken the measurement of availability when the interview technique is used. Adult patrons often do not know what they want, are not able to verbalize what they want, or prefer to avoid asking for help. Children have all of these difficulties and more: their inexperience, their strong desire to please adults and their penchant for settling for less than what they need. Such factors will greatly skew interview results. Expect juvenile fill rates via interview to be very high and more than likely inflated. Remember, juvenile materials are less available, in general, than adult materials.[2] It is difficult to see how fill rates gathered in this form can be accurate enough to be useful in evaluating collections — especially juvenile collections.

Despite the muddled nature of this kind of materials "availability," the interview technique has enjoyed considerable support. However, this support is being questioned[3] and some librarians are now recognizing the need for refinement or even a new approach. It is interesting to note that the 1984-85 Wisconsin LSCA project on children's services output measures[4] did not measure title and subject fill rates due to practical reasons, i.e., the difficulty of arranging for and gathering the survey data.

To measure availability in a way that makes it more useful and less muddled, try to measure fewer factors at a time. One alternative method is to divide "availability" into "external availability" and "internal availability." External availability measures those materials that are unavailable in the collection at the time of the request. Track the unavailability of materials by keeping an Unfilled Requests Log. Whenever a patron request cannot be answered, note the title or subject in the log and the reason the request could not be filled: the item is "checked out" or the library "does not own." Accumulate all entries at the end of the month and tally up those that recur. Entries in this monthly Accumulated Unavailability Data Log that appear over a period of time or with sudden intensity are candidates for purchase. Some librarians try to spot such trends informally as they run across them but it pays to accumulate the data in written form, especially if there is more than one staff member working in the children's area.

Internal availability involves gathering data directly from the collection and will answer the question: Of all the titles in a particular collection section, what percent are on the shelf, available for circulation at a particular point in time? The technique as explained by De Prospo[5] involves sampling the shelflist and physically checking the shelves for the titles picked. This approach has two strong points in its favor. First, it gets rid of the subjective uncertainties of surveying people and secondly, it provides an excellent method for evaluating duplication rate within collection sections.

Collection managers know the importance of duplicating popular titles. The more unwanted titles patrons have to search through to get to the ones they want, the greater the chance they will end up choosing fewer titles. If frequently used titles are duplicated heavily and little-used titles are weeded, circulation will increase even though there is a decrease in the total number of titles. Assuming adequate collection size, as the rate of duplication increases, both availability and circulation will increase until duplication saturation hits. Most juvenile collections are a long way from too much duplication.

Measuring internal availability rates will uncover where duplication is needed. If two copies of a book are owned, the title will be available more often and to more patrons than if just one copy is owned. This fact will be reflected in the internal–availability rate (number of titles found on shelf divided by number of titles owned) of the collection section. Collection managers can use this data to experiment. If the availability rate of one collection section is low, the children's librarian might try ordering additional copies of fast–moving titles in that section and weeding slow–moving ones. If the number one fault of public library collection managers is buying too many titles and not enough copies like some believe, then an excellent use of internal availability rates would be to raise the duplication rate overall, thereby raising both availability and circulation for the whole collection.

Most of the collection management techniques described so far can be done manually and in some libraries where objective measures have been seen as important, they have been for many years. Computers, of course, can make some of the work easier and can provide more detailed data that would be difficult or time consuming to gather. Now that computer help is here, however, that often–heard but unfortunate assertion "We're too busy to gather statistics" will be seen for its real meaning: Objective measures are not important.

There is a fear among children's librarians that the use of objective data will increase the quantity of popular materials at the expense of quality, usually less–popular, materials. Collection management statistics are simply tools; they provide additional information that collection managers can use to see their collections from additional viewpoints. Such an approach does not have to conflict with a concern for quality materials. After all, a good review gets a title into the collection, but a good circulation track record of a title only gets the collection additional copies or additional titles that have been recommended. If collection quality suffers at a particular library, it is the fault of library policy or its ineffective implementation, not the fact that statistical tools are used.

Robbins–Carter and Zweizig have said that "the central task of collection evaluation is to assess the relationship of the offered collection to the moving target of

user needs."[6] With statistical tools at the collection manager's disposal, collection weaknesses are easier to discern and library collections will become more finely tuned to their users.

Interest in output measures has grown recently in many quarters. Concerning school library collection building Jacqueline Mancall and Christopher Swisher state: "There is no longer any place for the uninformed collection manager. Unique usage factors and curriculum plans should determine all collection activity. Media specialists should incorporate local evaluation studies of materials' use into collection decision making."[7] The Public Library Association is currently developing standards based on output data and is encouraging data collection and output measure surveys. The American Library Association is publishing books and manuals on the subject.

Subjective collection management techniques like list checking and evaluation by personal impression are no longer enough. Librarians who serve children should add objective output data techniques to their collection management skills if they have not already done so. Using statistical data to increase the factual base of collection management will give librarians the tools to know and interpret their collections in new ways and provide evidence for convincing administrators of outstanding performance. Improved library services will be the result.

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1 Douglas Zweizig and Eleanor Jo Rodger, *Output Measures for Public Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Assn., 1982), p. 53-60.

2 Ernest R. De Prospo and others, *Performance Measures for Public Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Assn., 1973), p.36.

3 George D'Elia, Materials Availability Fill Rates—Useful Measures of Library Performance? *Public Libraries* 24:106-10 (Fall 1985).

4 Douglas L. Zweizig and others, *Output Measures for Children's Services in Wisconsin Public Libraries: A Pilot Project —1984-85* (Unpublished LSCA project, Madison, WI. 1985).

5 De Prospo, p. 34-36.

6 Jane Robbins–Carter and Douglas L. Zweizig, Are We There Yet? Lesson Two: Evaluating Library Collections, *American Libraries* 16:72 (Nov. 1985).

7 Jacqueline Mancall and Christopher Swisher, Developing Collections for the Eighties and Beyond, in *School Library Media Annual*, 1983. V. 1, ed. Shirley Aaron and Pat Scales, (Littleton, CO.: Libraries Unlimited, 1983), p. 269.

IV. Structured Discussion as an Evaluation Technique

Introduction

Previous chapters have discussed a number of evaluation techniques, most of which involve counting things. (Even interviewing can produce countable results, though the processes described by Eliza Dresang and Lynn MacDonald do not necessarily lead to counting.) Many librarians feel that what they do is not measurable in numerical terms. Since most of us come from humanities backgrounds, we value the personal, aesthetic, intellectual, educational, even inspirational qualities that library users may find in library materials and services. Public library work is characterized by service to individuals who come to the library voluntarily, and public librarians are loathe to reduce individuals to ciphers, particularly children.

Nevertheless, the quality and effectiveness of services and programs need to be evaluated for the purposes of planning and decision-making. This chapter, then, is about an evaluation method that takes full advantage of the marvelous diversity of humankind and encourages individuals to express their opinions, reactions, ideas, and desires: Structured discussion.

What is meant by this is not the usual staff meeting where news is exchanged and problems discussed. Undoubtedly evaluation sometimes takes place in such meetings, but here we are dealing with meetings called specifically for the purpose of evaluation. Discussion for evaluation requires a structure appropriate to the situation and the kinds of decisions to be made, a discussion leader or facilitator who can keep

the discussion on track without imposing her own views, and group members who are prepared to discuss the issues, who have done their homework, in other words, and have a common ground upon which to base their discussion.

In the articles that follow, the authors focus on discussion for the evaluation of children's books in a variety of circumstances. The ideas and methods proposed are well suited, however, to many other situations. Discussion may be used to evaluate policies and procedures, management practices, goals and objectives, activity programs, services, staff training, and facilities. In fact, structured discussion can even be used to decide what ought to be evaluated! Discussion can be a valuable adjunct to statistical kinds of evaluation. For instance, summer reading programs are typically evaluated by such measures as the number of children who signed up for the program, the number of children who completed the program, and the number who attended special activities. To add perspective to these counts, it can be helpful to discuss the observations of the program with a few of the participants, including clerical staff, teachers, parents, and children. A more complete picture of the program will emerge, increasing the likelihood that when changes are made, they will be meaningful changes.

We sometimes think of evaluation as a process that is designed at the beginning of a project and carried out at the end of the project. Some writers call this "summative evaluation" because it "sums up" the thing being evaluated. In actuality, it is often helpful or even necessary to evaluate a project before its midpoint or to try a new procedure for a period of time and evaluate it before adopting it in a final form. This kind of evaluation is called "formative evaluation" because it treats activities as on-going processes susceptible to change in midstream, forming and re-forming themselves. Many aspects of children's librarianship are constantly shifting shape rather than coming to a discrete terminus; formative evaluation is particularly appropriate for such activities. Discussion can be a convenient method of formative evaluation because it does not require statistical apparatus, questionnaires or large samples. During a year-long LSCA project, for example, it would be better to have a structured discussion at the end of the fifth month than to wait until the year was up to evaluate the completed project. If the project as planned is not meeting its

objectives, far better to know about it in time to make changes than to risk the quality of the entire project.

The articles that follow take up many of the fine points to be considered when organizing and carrying out discussions. The first article discusses the need for discussion in light of the nature of reading. In the second article, Kathleen T. Horning writes about discussion as part of the process of selecting new books, in addition to using published reviews. Books may also be discussed at the time of a complaint or challenge to their presence in libraries. Dianne Hopkins shows how discussions for reconsideration differ from other kinds of book discussion. Eliza T. Dresang then explores the unique qualities of discussion for awarding distinctions and medals, particularly the processes used by the Association for Library Service to Children. The chapter concludes with the guidelines used at the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin—Madison and a commentary on how those guidelines function at the CCBC and how they may be used in contexts other than book discussion.

Book Discussion as an Evaluation Tool

Holly Willett

Children's librarians are familiar with book discussion for a variety of evaluative purposes. Many of us are involved in local or regional book selection discussions; we participate on book award juries; some of us have been involved in discussions reconsidering a book that has been challenged. Probably all of us have discussed books for the pure joy of it. Professionally and personally, we spend a lot of time talking about books, deciding their quality or estimating their usefulness to library users. We probably haven't spent much time thinking systematically about book discussion itself, though, and in recent years, many of the large library systems have given up the regular book discussion meetings that characterized children's services ten or fifteen years ago.

I wish to remind readers of the things they already know about book discussion as a tool for evaluation but put the knowledge into a more cohesive framework. I will deal with the topic in a general way. Kathleen Horning, Dianne Hopkins, and Eliza Dresang will discuss specific contexts of discussion: evaluating new books, reconsidering challenged books, and conferring awards and distinctions upon books. While the four of us are concerned about evaluating books through discussion, many of our comments would certainly apply to discussion of film, video, computer software, magazines—virtually any medium of communication—as well as many other aspects of children's services. I'm going to begin with a specific example of an experience which will be familiar to the reader.

One of the courses I teach is a survey of children's literature. Towards the beginning of each semester, I ask my students to study two picture books, *The Three Robbers* by Tomi Ungerer (Atheneum, 1962) and *Ben's Trumpet* by Rachel Isadora (Greenwillow, 1979). Inevitably someone in the class will say that she doesn't like *The Three*

Robbers because it teaches children that it's okay to steal. The first time this happened I was very surprised—I shouldn't have been, but I was—since I've always relished the book and cheerfully used it with preschoolers. Generally, most of the class disagrees with the objecting student. When we proceed to talk about *Ben's Trumpet*, the students initially have a lot to say about the graphic emotional power of the illustrations and their interaction with the text. Finally, I will ask if anyone can see why some people have objected to the book as being racist. Nearly all of my students are white and there has never been an African American in the class, so sometimes students take a little while to think about this. Eventually, someone will point out that the image of Ben's family is rather negative. Other students will disagree that blackness is important in the context of the story. Usually there is a lively discussion of whether either of these books should be presented to children, and if so, how.

Surely the reader has encountered someone who disagreed radically with your point of view about a book or remembers at least one instance in your undergraduate career in which an irritated professor dismissed a hapless student's maladroit interpretation of a major work of literature. Perhaps you have read a glowing book review in one journal only to find that another reviewer in another journal has panned the same book. More often, you find that the other opinion is not radically different but simply presents an aspect of the book that you had not observed. It is these disagreements and variant perceptions which make it necessary to use book discussion for the purposes of evaluation, particularly in situations where some kind of consensus or group judgment is needed.

Most of us probably accept the notion that the source of the disagreements or differing points of view springs from each human being's uniqueness. The process by which we arrive at our differing perceptions is actually rather complex and fascinating. It is intimately bound to the process of reading. As I've been reading about criticism and the effects of media, I've observed that there seems to be a convergence of thought among cognitive psychologists and literary critics. They seem to be telling us that reading is a process of negotiation or construction, in various meanings of those words. In what follows, I'm going to talk about reading in general, not just from a child's point of view, and my examples will not all be from children's literature.

A reader has on the one hand a message from another person or persons, (the author and/or illustrator) who is most likely not an intimate acquaintance of the reader, and on the other hand, the reader has a set of tools for deciphering that message. The reader's toolkit includes a knowledge of written and pictorial symbols, a knowledge of how texts are organized, a knowledge of life based on the reader's personal experience, and perhaps some knowledge related to the book but not part of the book, such as knowing the biography of the author. Most importantly, the reader has the skill to use the other tools to make sense of the message. As a reader works through a text, she decodes the written alphabetic symbols plus the graphic symbols of any illustrations and constructs meaning out of the text by using her tools in a strategic manner. She asks herself a series of questions, such as, what do I know about this subject? how do I read this kind of text? does this make sense? why did the author tell me this about the character? what's going to happen next? do I need to go back and reread the previous page? does this story fit what I know about how real people act in such situations? All the time, the reader is constructing a personal mental image of the text that grows and changes as she reads.

You can easily see how the contents of readers' toolkits could differ greatly from one reader to another: Family background; life experience; when and where and how you learned to read as well as your inherited intellectual abilities all have their parts to play in your reading. The nature of one's toolkit can determine what one reads and how well one reads or whether one reads at all. Children's toolkits are smaller than those of adults, since adults have not only had time to acquire more tools and fancier tools, but also have the cognitive development to use their tools. Adults have made frameworks from past reading experiences, such as patterns that stories frequently use. We have larger vocabularies, greater experience of the world, greater experience in making sense of a variety of texts, and sometimes a lot of education in how to construct meaning out of texts, perhaps even a course in children's literature. One of the major difficulties in evaluating children's books is that adults must attempt to judge the fit between what we estimate to be in children's reading toolkits and the books that authors, illustrators, and publishers provide for children. And very often we disagree among ourselves about how well a book will suit children because attempts to gauge the fit between book and child are pure speculation, based on our differing experiences with children in the past,

which may have nothing to do with the children who will actually read the book. We base our judgments of the fit between book and child on a non–random sample of children.

Authors and illustrators, for their parts, make assumptions about what their readers know, assumptions about the contents of their readers' toolboxes, if you will. Now we have all heard authors who claim that they write for themselves and don't consider their audience at all. Frankly, I'm skeptical of this claim. If you're only writing for yourself, why not just keep a journal? Why go through the agony of publishing? I suspect that most authors for children are to some degree both conscious of and sympathetic to their audiences. I will let Katherine Paterson speak for this point of view:

> My aim as a writer is to engage young readers in the life of a story that came out of me, but which is not mine, but ours. I don't just want my readers' time or attention, I want their lives. I want their senses, imagination, intellect, emotions, and all the experiences they have known breathing life into the words upon the page. I hope to do my part so well that young readers will delight to join me as co–authors. (Kirkpatrick, p. 603.)

Paterson would agree with the cognitive psychologists that reading is not a passive reception of whatever comes. It's hard work.

Writers leave cues and clues for readers, like Hansel leaving white stones and bread crumbs behind him. And like the bread crumbs and white stones, some cues are more effective than others. Individual books have their individual ways of requiring the reader to co–author the text, and genres also have characteristic ways of provoking reader involvement with the text. Some genres even have ways of deliberately misleading or confusing the reader. For example, mysteries are guessing games in which the reader must negotiate a path strewn with false clues in order to construct both the story of the crime and the story of solving the crime. In many fantasies the author sets the reader down in a secondary world where the reader must infer its parameters and possibilities from events, setting, dialogue, and internal monologue.

In order to participate fluently in this joint venture of text construction, readers must have well–developed toolkits and must have learned how to use them to the point that they are just barely conscious of doing so. If one needs to be consciously decoding a sentence word by word or forcing oneself to monitor one's reading moment by moment, reading slows, down, becomes tedious, and loses its savor. Many children and adults are in this predicament. One of my acquaintances is dyslexic and hardly ever reads fiction because she simply cannot spare the time it would take away from the reading she must do for work. She has compensated for her perceptual difficulties by being a slow but very comprehending reader. Those of us who read more quickly may be barely conscious of what we're doing as we read. And this has its drawbacks, for it means that we are not fully aware of our responses or the stimuli that trigger our responses to what we read. We do not always recognize the cue in the text laid down by the author. We build meaning so quickly that most of us can't recall the entire process, not even through conscious effort.

I draw three conclusions from this long–winded exegesis on reading. First, all of us are handicapped readers. Second, when we read books we often find ourselves in them at least as much as we discover something new. Third, evaluation of any particular book should take into account the means by which the author invites readers to make sense of the text. Each of these points constitutes something of a dilemma for those of us engaged in evaluating books, but I believe that book discussion can help us.

When I say that we are all handicapped readers I mean that we all have limitations on our reading ability. All of that experience which opens our lives to the vicarious potentialities of books also limits what each of us is able to take from reading. We may not recognize a particular word; we may not have read the Bible or Grimms' fairy tales and will miss allusions to them, or we may not have read James Joyce before and therefore don't really know what to do with him. Furthermore, we may have such limited experience of the world that a book set in a foreign country may be incomprehensible because the characters' motivations are not clear to us. In many, many ways we may encounter what have been termed no–fault communication accidents in our reading.

In April 1989 I attended a conference of literary scholars which provided me with an example of the limitations of experience among highly sophisticated readers. A major concern among the conferees was the increasing plurality of English language literature. That is, we now have major writers in the English speaking countries who are members of aboriginal cultures, such as Maoris in New Zealand and Native Americans in the United States. They are writing novels about the intersection between their culture and European culture in styles that reflect the two ways of thinking, a situation which requires that readers know something about both cultures. Salman Rushdie's work is a case in point. The scholars felt at a loss to deal with the situation because it seems impossible for anyone to know enough about all cultures to be able to comprehend the variety of cultures represented in English language literature today.

If scholars are having problems, what will happen to children? Children's librarians are concerned, and rightly so, that there be more children's books by and about minorities. Some of us believe that if we had more children's books about minorities and about cultural clashes, today's children would have fewer problems dealing with a pluralistic literature when they become adult readers, but we have no way of predicting what children will learn about other cultures from books.

The point is, no one has the perfect reader's toolbox, if we could even discover what it might contain. Whether you are a child or a scholar or something in between, your background is necessarily limited, and you do not recognize everything an author wants you to understand in her book. Nor will you ever be able to recover all of your responses to a text after you have finished reading it.

Therefore, if those of us involved in book evaluation are to perform adequately, we must pool our resources. There are various ways that we can do this. We can gather up all the book reviews and all the critical essays, and we will have part of the discussions. But this is essentially a one–sided affair. You can't have an exchange with a book review. And exchange among those who have read the same book is vitally important to the evaluative process. What one person says may trigger a memory in another person or integrate two confusing passages in the mind of a third. Discussion may bring out allusions to other books or provide information that will clarify

motivation of characters. One's nagging but unnameable feelings are finally given shape by someone else's comments during discussion. Reviews can sometimes provide such amplifying insights, but it is in the back and forth of book discussion—where you say something, and I respond, and you say something else, and a third person joins in with a question—that a variety of views and understandings can be aired with the possibility of responding not only to the verbal content but also the body language of the discussants.

Through the process of sharing our experiences of reading a particular text, we create much fuller mental images of the text as a whole. A sense of the wholeness of a book is a necessity for rendering judgment of it. But wait, if making sense of a text is such an individual affair, how can there be any reasonable group evaluation of it? The second implication of the nature of reading was that in reading we so often find ourselves. In fact, many readers use their reading to do this quite deliberately. Because we create the text as we read, we not only find ourselves in it we also add things of our own making to it, things not intended by the author. If we take Katherine Paterson's word for it, it is desirable that readers make these "additions" to texts, but then there can be no incorrect interpretations, no incorrect evaluations, everyone is right and no one is wrong. What we discuss may not be so much a text but ourselves, selves that books sometimes allow us to encounter in perhaps more organized and coherent ways than we usually do. If we put our individual constructions with their various assumptions, interpretations, and creations into one big development, so to speak, won't we just make a jumbled, incoherent mess, perhaps a literary strip mall? Sometimes this happens, sometimes we leave a discussion feeling as if nothing is settled, and we have more questions than answers.

This is not necessarily a problem. It is good to have questions because they keep us thinking. It is good to remember that one evaluation discussion is not the final word on any book. Consider the Newbery Medal books, supposedly "distinguished contributions" to American children's literature. Each Newbery book was judged to be of lasting value at the time it was given the award, but many of the early winners are no longer read or discussed, not even by children's literature scholars. We should not fault our foremothers for being poor guessers. Our own guesses about books may not stand the

test of time, either. The process of discovering which books mean the most to readers and offer the most opportunities for many people to find valuable aspects of themselves in literature is a process of constant reevaluation. The value of the Newbery and other distinctions may not be in the books themselves but in the level of discussion that they occasion, inside and outside the award committees.

Even though we would shy away from saying that individual interpretations of literature might be wrong, it is safe to say that some evaluations may be more valuable than others, in the sense of being more helpful in particular situations. We've all known individuals whom we consider to have superior literary insight. Often these people have an ability to integrate various aspects of a book and create a whole that they can articulate to others—they can create a vision and share that vision—illuminating new possibilities for the rest of us. When these gifted people share their sensitivities with a group in a book discussion, the listeners' ability to go deeper into a text (and into themselves) is enhanced.

It is the learning that takes place during book discussion that leads me to add something parenthetically about book discussion and performance evaluation of children's staff. Book discussion is one way of discovering the strengths and weaknesses that staff may have in their knowledge of children's literature in particular and literature in general. Through carefully chosen books and a well-designed framework for discussion, one may not only diagnose problems but also begin to cure them.

To go back to my question about the possibility of evaluating books through discussion when readers create so much of the book: Part of the answer may lie in having a framework for the discussion, knowing what you have to decide and designing a mechanism for reaching a decision. Such frameworks or patterns would vary according to the context of the evaluation, so I will not say much about them here as my colleagues will talk about various contexts of book evaluation through discussion. Book discussion also requires tactful leadership which allows disagreement and in fact sees conflict as a necessary ingredient of creative problem-solving. A book discussion leader should be capable of integrating disparate views without imposing her own on the group as they seek resolution. Another part of the answer to my question is that the text

itself is always available as a referent for discussion, a common ground around which the conversation revolves. While readers may disagree about meaning and value, they still have the words of the text in common, and after all, part of the fascination of book discussion is the fact that people do differ in what they have to say.

The third implication of the reader–as–coauthor theory is that the mechanisms and techniques the author uses to invoke the reader's constructive abilities should be part of the evaluation. Children's librarians are used to talking about plot, style, setting, point of view, characterization, tone, and unity—all those elements of pedagogical or structural criticism we were taught in high school and college. In addition to these aesthetic qualities, we frequently talk about whether children have enough experience or vocabulary to appreciate one book or another. This implies that children's librarians are very aware of the question of audience; so, what I'm suggesting is not all that new. I simply recommend that we become more conscious and systematic at including the reader–in–the–book as part of book evaluation.

Vocabulary and experience are not the only assumptions authors make in devising techniques to hook their readers. For example, books for young adolescents are frequently written in the first person, betraying an assumption that these young people are self–absorbed and will most easily identify with the protagonist through the "I." Consider how picturebooks for young children use illustration with text to deliver a complete story, assuming that the reader/viewer has the intellectual skills to integrate the two modes of storytelling.

Authors also have authorial voices, which give the reader a sense that a particular individual is speaking directly to her. The author's real personality actually may have nothing to do with the author that the text implies, an author who wants the child reader to understand that the author is on the child's side. To pick a familiar example, consider E. B. White. Throughout his writing, whether letters, essays, or books for children, White maintains a very characteristic tone of genial, ironic narration, poking affectionate fun at his characters. In *Charlotte's Web*, many of the adults are comic stereotypes to whom the child reader can feel pleasantly superior.

White seems to say, "See, I'm your ally, I know how it feels to be a child." This same sense of intimacy is part of his works for adults.

Authors also leave gaps in their stories that the reader must fill in because the text doesn't explicitly tell her. For example, unless the reader figures out that Max imaginatively creates the place Where the Wild Things Are, the reader will not fully appreciate Max's achievement in dealing with his anger toward his mother.

Evaluators might ask themselves, what is this author doing to make it easier for children to become involved in this book? Are these tactics successful? Are they appropriate to the intended audience? These speculations can be explored most fully in a group book discussion context where the variety of perceptions and responses can help readers make more sense out of their reading. Even though reading can be viewed as an attempt to make sense out of a text, every such attempt is not successful. Book discussion can improve the success rate and give evaluators for more information for the decision-making that must frequently take place. In closing, I would like to return to the discussion of *Ben's Trumpet* and *The Three Robbers* which takes place in my children's literature course. After the disagreements have been aired, the class goes on to discuss what we see and what we know that allow reasonable people to make such divergent interpretations of the same texts and illustrations. We try to find evidence in the illustrations and the words of the books for all points of view, and we discuss the nature and validity of the evidence we find. But ultimately, we have to turn to an examination of ourselves and the knowledge we have about the artist/authors, about the nature of picturebooks, and even knowledge about the society we live in.

Lately, I've begun to realize how much these discussions with my students have affected my thinking about these two books. I still enjoy them for the same qualities that originally attracted me and led me to include *The Three Robbers* and *Ben's Trumpet* in my course. I also recognize that there may be unintentional racism in *Ben's Trumpet*, the result of a well-meaning white person's efforts. At the same time, I can still read *Ben's Trumpet* as the story of the unrecognized child artist who needs the assistance of an understanding adult. This is a universal theme and not uncommon in children's literature. In the case of *The Three Robbers*, I have to confess that while I

think the book is a parable about the unexamined life, I can also understand how a casual reader could interpret it as teaching children that stealing has its rewards. I have to carefully point out to students that the robbers are not rewarded for stealing; they are rewarded for making reparations in the form of caring for orphans. I also tell my students that Tomi Ungerer would agree with Marshall McLuhan that art is subversive; Ungerer is deliberately subversive and provocative in many of his picturebooks so that his work needs to be examined thoughtfully for its messages.

It has been my contention that the messages and values of picturebooks, novels, nonfiction, and all types of texts can be most thoroughly discovered through group book discussion that has some structure and a facilitating leader. My colleagues will discuss some specific situations in which book discussion is particularly valuable and helpful.

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Beyond Reviews: Using Book Discussion as a Method for New Materials Selection

Kathleen T. Horning

In her opening statement Willett spoke of the importance of pooling our resources to make adequate evaluations of books. One of the resources she mentioned was professional reviews. I would imagine that all of us working in public libraries use reviews to some extent in new materials selection. It's one of the things we're taught to do in library school. Many libraries have the systematic use of reviews built right into their selection policies, as in instances where a library must have at least two favorable reviews on file for a particular book to justify its purchase.

The extent to which we as public librarians rely on reviews varies. Out of necessity, many librarians must rely on reviews completely for new materials selection, as they have no access to an examination collection, no opportunity for first-hand evaluation of newly published books. Good professional reviews inform us. They tell us what a book is about, describe artwork, point out strengths and weaknesses, suggest age-levels, and occasionally recommend ways a book might be used, as in "great for reading aloud" or "easily accessible for homework assignments." But as Willett pointed out, even the best of reviews provide what is essentially a one-sided affair: you can't have an exchange with a book review. And as those of us who have had opportunities to use examination collections of new books know, there is simply no substitute for first-hand experience with a book.

I have been in situations, as I imagine we all have, where I have only reviews to go by and no book. Sometimes all the reviewers agree that a particular book is wonderful. Sometimes they agree that a book is ordinary or mediocre or flawed. And sometimes, the reviewers disagree. I find all these situations frustrating, because there is no chance

for exchange, no chance to ask the reviewer questions, no chance to make my own observations and judgments. I end up, in this situation, making observations and judgments about the reviews rather than the book which is reviewed. Three reviews of a recently published book, *A Balloon for Grandad*, will serve as a case in point. The reviews from *Booklist* and *Bulletin for the Center of Children's Books* are very positive; the review from *School Library Journal* is quite negative. The first two reviews have stars—and I confess that stars weigh heavily in my own decision-making process. But how many of us have had the experience of knowing a book and seeing a starred review of it and thinking "That was starred?!" All of the reviews comment on the high quality of the artwork in *A Balloon for Grandad* but I find that I am troubled by the third review from *School Library Journal* which is so negative in its criticism of the story. And without having a chance to see the book myself and with the consideration that the reviewer for *School Library Journal* is the one reviewer represented here who is a practicing children's librarian, I ask myself: Is this another one of those picture books that dazzles you with its artwork but has very little to offer in terms of child appeal or story? You know the kind of book I'm referring to!

As it happens, I have the book itself here and as you can see the artwork is beautiful. Nothing, not even Betsy Hearne's particularly eloquent description of the art, compares with actually seeing it for yourself. First-hand experience with the book allows me to make my own observations and judgments about it. I observe, for example, as none of the reviewers had pointed out, that in this family the father and the little boy are light-skinned and have brown hair and blue eyes, while the mother and grandfather are dark-skinned and have black (or white, in the case of the grandfather) hair and brown eyes.

Those of us who have the opportunity to see the books first-hand in order to make selections of new materials for libraries are very lucky indeed. Working here at the CCBC over the past nine years, I have had the opportunity not only to discuss new books in a number of different contexts, but also to observe the selection processes of the many, many librarians who come here from all over the state to go beyond reviews, and take a first-hand look at the books they are considering for purchase. In speaking about her film *What's a Good Book?*, the Weston Woods film about library book selection,

filmmaker Joanna Foster once commented that she faced a real challenge in making this film, because most of what happens in book selection happens inside a person's head, and doesn't make for very dynamic film footage. This I would say is true of most of the book selection I have had the chance to observe. A common bit of scenery here at the CCBC is a librarian, seated at one of the book carrels out in our reading room, facing a long row of books with little 3 x 5 review cards sticking up out of each book. She grabs a book, pulls out the reviews and scans each one, then turns to the book. If it's a picture book or a short work of nonfiction, she may read the entire thing. If it's a longer work, she'll read an excerpt, check out the front matter and the back matter, make a few pencil marks on one of her 3 x 5 cards, shove the book aside and move on to the next one. All of this may happen in a matter of minutes, and in some instances, seconds. I can't see all of the things going on in her head, but as a public librarian myself who occasionally does this sort of book selection, I know that she's looking at format and type size to make judgments about accessibility and age level. She's thinking about the library collection she works with, making judgments about how this book would fit in and where. She's thinking about the community she serves and considering using this book in a preschool story hour or suggesting it in her readers' advisory work. And, she's thinking, overall, about her book budget.

One thing I observe quite frequently when there is a group here from one library system, is that process as I've described it above with one addition. At the end of the process, instead of shoving the book to one side, she'll hand it to a colleague and say, "Here. Tell me what you think of this." This is an opening for a book discussion—not a formal structured discussion, but a book discussion nonetheless. There are times when a formal structured discussion is not necessary or possible. Librarians who work together and have a common base of experience, in the sense that they serve the same community, work in the same library system, often develop a type of shorthand which allows for this type of discussion. It requires good communication skills, trust, confidence, and sometimes includes a recognition of special skills various colleagues bring to the job. For example, if I have some questions about the effectiveness of a particular board book, I refer them to my colleague Rose Ann Ableidinger, who has had a great deal of experience doing toddler story hours and has a good understanding of how babies respond to literature. This type of discussion is brief and informal, but I find

that I learn a lot from Rose Ann and that by asking her questions, I can hone my own evaluative skills when it comes to board books.

Some of the shorthand discussions that go on in the CCBC reading room get pretty lively, and occasionally spill over onto the CCBC staff. If one of us happens to be walking by on our way from one place to another, we may be handed a book, with the question "Have you read this? What do you think of it?" And the discussion goes on. Because the CCBC staff doesn't have the same base of common experience as the librarians here for book selection, the discussion might take a little longer. We don't have the shorthand. Ginny Moore Kruse might point out something in her comments about the book that the librarian hadn't noticed or thought of or vice–versa. This sort of thing goes on here nearly every day.

I have also, albeit less frequently, had the occasion to observe some more structured book discussion when librarians have been here to evaluate books. What is typical in these situations is for one librarian in a group to give an oral review of a book she has read, after which there is an opportunity for her colleagues to ask questions or make comments. In addition to discussing the merits of a particular book, these discussions frequently include a discussion of whether or not the title should be purchased, and in what quantity. This is a type of book selection that you can see. What Joanne Foster described as happening in the head is out in the open.

What I have sometimes observed at these type of book discussions is one person, the only person who has read the book, holding it up and then tearing it to shreds. This, I have observed, closes the door on book discussion. Who wants to waste time asking questions about a book that has no merit?

Of course, the way to avoid this sort of situation is to have more than one reader for a book. Then there can be dialogue and a discussion, the sort that Willett described so well in her opening speech. This is an ideal, very hard to reach, because it requires a commitment of time and staff. But it builds on skills we already have. And the rewards of a formal structured book discussion as a means of evaluating new materials are boundless, personally and professionally. Book discussion helps to hone the critical

skills important in evaluation. I know that this is true in the continuing development of my own critical skills and I have seen it happen in colleagues with whom I have discussed books over a period of months or years. Sharper critical abilities allow us to be more selective in our evaluation of materials. We know what we're buying and why—what we're not buying and why not.

Book discussion allows for the ultimate pooling or resources. Willett used the term "toolkit" in her speech. I'd like to talk for a moment about the librarian's toolkit—what we bring to our reading in addition to our own personal experiences, knowledge, and abilities. We bring our professional experiences, knowledge and abilities. These would include our experiences with a particular community we serve, our knowledge of the existing library collection, and our ability to translate this knowledge and experience into library services for children. When I was describing earlier that process of the lone librarian sitting at a carrel selecting books, what I was observing was the librarian delving into her professional toolkit to evaluate materials. But I couldn't see this toolkit. Book discussion makes it visible and not only makes it visible, but provides an opportunity to add to it. I'd like to give an example of how this can work.

A few years ago I participated in a book discussion in which one of the titles under consideration was *The Burning Questions of Bingo Brown* by Betsy Byars. Everyone had favorable comments to make about the book, including me. There was one person in the group, however, who pointed out that she was troubled by one aspect of Bingo's behavior. If you've read the book, you may remember that, throughout it, Bingo feels he is under so much stress that he has difficulty sleeping, so he is constantly popping junior aspirins to help himself to go sleep. It's a comic device, as Byars intended it to be. I had thought it funny when I read it, as did a number of other people at the discussion, if they thought much about it at all. The one librarian I have mentioned, however, found it disturbing, not only that such behavior went on throughout the book without ever being challenged, but that we as readers were lulled into believing that popping pills was funny. Well, I think we all sympathized with this librarian's concerns, and some of us were, I think, slightly disturbed that we hadn't had the same concern ourselves. If we were relying completely on reviews in considering *The Burning*

Questions of Bingo Brown, the pill–popping issue would never have come up. If we were relying on only my reading of the book, it wouldn't have come up either. I missed it. Now imagine the librarian who brought it up in the situation where she was the sole reader reviewing it for a group, in the type of one reader book discussions I described earlier. She might have chosen to focus on this issue and make it central to the discussion, tearing the book to shreds. There would not have been the give–and–take, or the chance for positive responses to the book which a discussion with more than one reader allows for.

Of course, we bought *The Burning Questions of Bingo Brown*. It received excellent reviews; it went on to be a *Booklist* Editor's Choice and a *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year. And, besides, Betsy Byars is an extremely popular author. Her books are in high demand. So, of course, there was no question but that we'd buy *The Burning Questions of Bingo Brown*. We bought it, however, with the knowledge of the pill–popping scenes and, while this knowledge did not influence our decision about putting it on the shelves, it does influence our decision about featuring it in recommended book lists, bibliographies and displays. And I find that I myself hesitate to single it out for a recommendation for a good, funny book.

Selection doesn't stop with purchase. We continue to select books every day. We select books for bibliographies and displays. We select books for programs, such as preschool story hours and book talks. We select books for individual children as we provide reference and reader's advisory services. Using book discussion as some aspect of the selection process can help to put us a little closer to our goal of providing the right book for the right child at the right time.

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Use of Discussion in Reconsideration of a Title

Dianne McAfee Hopkins

We most often think of book discussion in the context of evaluation at the time it is considered for initial purchase. Book discussion can also be a useful tool at the time of a complaint.

How is book discussion used at the time of a complaint different from discussion for purchase or programming? There are five differences that will be focused on: one difference has to do with the players; another difference has to do with the focus of the book; another difference has to do with the background or context in which the discussion occurs; a fourth difference is the opportunity for discussion; and finally the fifth concerns at what stage such a discussion occurs.

First, the players. The discussion we might have about a book that is being reconsidered can include several groups of people. The first is the group that we commonly think of, that is, children's librarians talking about children's books or other materials. In a reconsideration discussion we might have other players. These players can include other librarians who are involved at the early stages of discussion, such as directors, or reference or adult services librarians as well as members of the public library staff who do not have a background in children's literature but who have a responsibility for selection. We also have the players who are involved in the context of the more formal stages of the decision, particularly members of the public library board who may participate on committees or in the final review process. These persons certainly have an interest in library materials, but they do not usually have formal library training in children's services or literature.

The second difference is the focus on the book or material for reconsideration. The book has been read or reread in most instances with the knowledge of what is deemed "wrong" with the book, rather than approaching it from the viewpoint of what is

positive or appreciated about the book. The openness that one has coming into a book discussion knowing that you will hear other viewpoints that will help you learn or grow in your understanding about the book is not likely to be present in this type of discussion. The focus also relates to how the participants will approach the reconsideration. In many instances the participants will have their minds already made up. I am using the term participant here to include the person who has complained about the material; that person has his or her mind made up, and you as the children's librarian probably have your mind made up, too. So we have people involved in the situation who have their minds made up and we are approaching the discussion with something already pointed out about this book that is perceived to be wrong. We also have a focus here—we think more particularly in terms of the child's toolkit referred to earlier by Willett. We think in terms of the child as one who is growing, developing, and absorbing information. Adults have concerns about what is presented to children, and we think about all of these issues as we approach the discussion.

The next difference that distinguishes book discussion during a complaint from that of purchase or programming is the background or context in which the book is discussed. We are looking at it more specifically in terms of the selection or collection development policy of the public library or public library system. We are thinking about the specific criteria that have been established, and are looking to see if those criteria were used in the selection of the material. So when you are reconsidering, the selection or collection development policies and the criteria in those policies will assume a prominence. While you know that the selection policy is there in the background when you select materials, in a case of reconsideration you are looking at it closely, looking at the book closely, and comparing the two because you are making sure the criteria were followed. The examination of the material will also reflect previous discussion that has occurred, if that has been part of the selection process. This can serve as a reminder, as a reaffirmation of what was most appreciated about the material.

It is likely to be helpful to be reminded of the oral discussion involved in the selection of the material. At the time of a complaint we also rely on reviews more than we would in open discussion. The person or persons who are going to make the final decision on whether the material is going to be retained will want to be aware of reviews. Depending on the process used in selection, you may be using reviews developed locally or in the system, but you will also want to use national and regional reviews about the material itself. The selection policy and reviews will therefore take on an additional prominence. The final context in which I would look at how a book is discussed during a complaint process is a context in which the book itself is not discussed and is what I would call the intellectual freedom context. That is to say, in some areas a book that is questioned is looked at in terms of intellectual freedom, in terms of access, in terms of the importance of having varying viewpoints. When we look at it in terms of intellectual freedom, sometimes the book itself is not discussed or is not looked at, but the whole process is looked at in terms of whether material should be accessible, and the mission of the public library. Some feel it is not necessary to go into the specifics about something that has been questioned but to rely on the principles of intellectual freedom to defend having material in the collection. The background or context in which the book is discussed may therefore include: the policy, reviews, previous discussions, and what the policy says about how material will be defended and discussed, and the intellectual freedom focus which is more absolutist and which may not permit, or encourage, discussion of the questioned material.

The opportunity for book discussion during a complaint will be determined by the procedures that have been established in the collection development policy. There are many varieties. Here are a few: the request for reconsideration may go directly to the library board and be considered at that level; the request may go to a committee of children's librarians and that committee would make recommendations that would go to the children's coordinator and on to the director; the request may go to a committee of librarians which would include but not be limited to children's librarians, and would be chaired by the director; the request may go to the selection committee for children's materials or to the director and action is taken following review by either the selection committee or the director; request may go to a group of children's librarians, who do not formally meet as a committee, but instead review the material separately, come to a

conclusion, and submit a personal recommendation in writing to the designated person. There are certainly subsets and many variations of the above examples. Opportunity for book discussion therefore depends greatly on what procedures have been set up for reviewing the material when there has been a complaint. What most of these practices have in common is that the complainant is not present to hear or to be involved in the initial discussions and in some cases the discussion is going to end there. In other cases the complainant comes into the picture only at the point at which a decision is appealed to the public library board.

A final difference in book discussion at the time of a complaint is the stage at which a discussion occurs. We have what I would call initial stages when a reconsideration is considered by a group of librarians in a meeting setting and that is one of the stages where open discussion can occur. We also have the more formal stage where the reconsideration would be considered at a meeting of the library board. There are some findings in communications research that would seem to be appropriate here. There is much in this field that we would find helpful in thinking about discussion and group process that we as children's librarians will want to spend more time learning about because it relates to how people communicate and how we are able to share. The two findings I'll share today relate to interpersonal discussion and interaction. Interpersonal discussion over time tends to increase accuracy more than agreement. Discussants don't end up seeing eye to eye after debating, but they have a better understanding of how people think. Another finding in communications research that I think you will find particularly interesting is in terms of reconsideration, the person who has complained, the point at which that person is involved, and the manner in which the complainant is involved. In an interpersonal encounter (such as a conversation or a discussion), people react to one another as unique individuals. They can sit and talk with an individual. In non–interpersonal situations (such as a reconsideration hearing), people respond to others more in terms of stereotypical roles. So that if the person who is complaining becomes involved primarily at the formal meeting stage, the person is going to see the director or the children's librarian, not the people who have these roles, and this makes a difference in communication.

There are some questions we need to think about as we look at reconsideration and the whole area of book discussion:

1. Should the complainant have an opportunity to listen to a book discussion of the book in question, or even to participate in such a discussion? You have heard about how much individuals grow and how we have an opportunity to look at the whole. We get all these viewpoints from all these directions. Is this something that the person who has complained about the book should have the opportunity to hear or to participate in? If your answer is yes, then at what point should the complainant participate in or listen to a discussion of the book in question?

2. Should librarians who are not children's librarians who are involved in the reconsideration of the title participate in a book discussion of the title that's been questioned?

3. How might the atmosphere of a formal reconsideration meeting change if a book discussion of the type we've been learning about sets the stage for a discussion about the material that has been questioned?

4. Is the retention of the material all that matters? Might there be other "victories" if book discussion sets the stage for the reconsideration of materials?

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Discussion for Awards and Distinctions

Eliza T. Dresang

I will address the difference between an award and a distinction before delineating the characteristics of evaluative discussion when awards and distinctions are the expected end product.

Webster defines award as:

> a judgment or final decision; something that is conferred or bestowed especially on the basis of merit and distinction as: discrimination or differentiation; a special honor or recognition

The words "judgment or final decision" in the definition of an award are significant and it is this concept in which an award differs from a distinction. An award honors a single book, e. g. the Newbery Award, the Coretta Scott King Award, while a distinction is given a book which is part of a group of books or a body of works having something in common, e.g. Notable Children's Books, Best Books for Young Adults.

The above definitions are important because, just as discussion of books considered for an award or distinction differs somewhat from other evaluative discussion, discussion of a book considered for an award differs somewhat from discussion of a book considered for a distinction. Evaluative discussion for books considered for either awards or distinctions differs from other types of book discussion in both **manner** and in **degree**.

The manner in which these discussions take place results from the framework placed around the discussion. This framework comes from the special criteria which must be kept in mind throughout the discussion. Just as general discussion rules are laid out for participants at the beginning in evaluation of books for any purpose, the specific criteria for an award or distinction must be communicated to participants and adhered

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to assiduously throughout both personal and group evaluation if the end result is to meet the intended purpose. Preparation for this type of discussion requires more time in order to place some parameters on the personal views brought to any discussion.

For example, prior to the first meeting of the Newbery Committee upon which I served, I engaged in a brief conversation with one of the committee members. "I am determined," she said,"that this year's winner will be accessible to elementary school children. We have too many Newbery winners for the older reader." While this is most likely the secret hope of many of us each year, one can comb the criteria for the Newbery Award and find nothing which sets this as a justifiable guideline.

In discussion of books for awards and distinctions, it is more important than perhaps for any other type of discussion to examine one's own agendas and find whether they do or do not fit the task at hand, to consider consciously what Willett has defined in her second observation about book discussion as "finding oneself in one's reading." By its nature, discussion for distinction has more carefully defined restrictions than discussion of any other type. A value of the group discussion is that when one does tend to stray from remarks which are helpful to the end goal, other group members readily guide the discussion back to its intended purpose. This generally does not present a problem once a group has reached a common understanding of the criteria which must guide the discussion.

Sometimes criteria for an award or distinction present a particular challenge to a committee because of their very nature. They may call for specialized knowledge which, if not possessed by the committee itself, must be obtained from outside experts and brought to the committee. Here "right" or "wrong" may exist in an evaluation. For example, the translated book chosen for the Batchelder award, an award which is presented to a publisher rather than to a book itself, must retain the true "substance...and flavor of the original work and should retain the viewpoint of the author" and "should not be unduly Americanized." On the other hand, another criterion reads that "in all cases, the committee must consider the book's manner of presentation for and the potential appeal to a child (read 'American child') audience." This brings a

focus to a distinction which might not have occurred had not the book been eligible for an honor.

One problem which faced this year's Batchelder Committee included whether kibbutz life was authentically portrayed in *The Boy From Over There*, (Houghton, 1988), and, if so, was enough detail given to make it understandable to an American child. As Willett said, adults can only guess at the answer to this question, but that estimating most certainly affects the manner of discussion. To include this book in a general collection of books for children would involve such a discussion but the resolution might be unimportant because at least a number of children would bring the background to understand the book, and the focus of discussion could be on literary merit, etc. But to single this book out for an award, one must be far more certain that the culture portrayed is intelligible. A different problem arose from the consideration of *Faithful Elephants*, (Houghton, 1988), a story of the extermination of elephants in the Tokyo Zoo during World War II, in order to prevent their escape into the city should the zoo be bombed. The nature of the slow and painful death of the animals and the decision to kill these animals in the first place which is not put into context because of the brevity of text, was a cultural element which the committee had to discuss. Again, such a discussion becomes far more important when a book is to be considered for an award. The style in *Crutches* (Lothrop, 1988), the book whose publisher was awarded the Batchelder this year, raised yet another question. Was the style that of the author or translator? Here at the CCBC we were fortunate to have a woman in one discussion of this book who was quite familiar with postwar German literature and could address this issue of authenticity.

Discussion for notable or best requires yet a different kind of mind set. Understanding what "worthy of note" means affects the manner in which the books under consideration will be discussed. Here we have "acceptance by children" rather than "appeal to a child audience" of the Newbery criteria. How does this alter the content of the discussion? The Laura Ingalls Wilder Award requires that the author have established a new type or kind of book or new trends in books available for children. Elizabeth George Speare, the most recently honored author for the Wilder Award, does not have a large body of work; yet the committee and all of you who voted

obviously believed that her four books established a new kind of trend in children's literature. Discussion of just what this was in evaluating these books was an important part of that evaluation. Once again this criterion will affect the manner in which the book is discussed.

Another important factor in the manner in which these books are discussed in the group process. I had the good fortune of being trained in a media evaluation institute funded by ALA for all award committee members prior to my Newbery Award experience. I went to this workshop expecting to hear something perhaps along the line of what I have just delineated. Instead, I spent two days without one mention of media, criteria, etc. The entire workshop was on group process and on the roles and responsibilities of members of a group attempting to reach a decision. The tendency of some to dominate, others to get off track, and the necessity of peer group monitoring was eye–opening. The manner in which one must operate in an award/distinction committee cannot be casual, and group cohesiveness becomes paramount.

Holding mock discussions which lead to local determination of awards or distinctions has great merit in the evaluative process in that participants come to understand the kinds of constraints and opportunities placed on such a committee. The influence of all the characteristics Willett mentioned, the limitations of readers, the bringing of one's self to the discussion, and the scrutiny of what the author has him or herself brought are all seen in a different light when the end result of the discussion must be the selection of one book or some books over others with justification for the results tied by necessity to the criteria. Issues which may cause controversy should be dealt with by these mock groups and outside opinion sought when necessary in preparation for the discussion.

Manner of discussion influenced by the presence of the need for an end product reflecting specific criteria is one way in which evaluative discussions differ from others. The other difference is degree or depth of analysis which can and will be applied to any one book. Although the manner of discussion can be fairly successfully simulated in mock discussions, the depth of analysis is far harder to experience in a less than "real" situation. The intensity and depth of discussion come partly from the sense

of responsibility borne by committee members. Most committee members, preceding a discussion at ALA, have engaged in numerous discussions with colleagues and children. The level of preparation one brings to an award or distinction evaluative discussion affects the depth to which that discussion may go. In the Notable Books Committees which have a relatively short time to devote to each book, discussion starts far beyond where casual discussion begins. In those committees considering awards rather than distinctions, the depth of discussion is even more apparent. The collective thought process does indeed have a sum that is greater than its parts and insights that simply are not possible in an initial discussion of a book emerge.

To refer once again to the Batchelder Committee, this committee has a luxury which even the Newbery/Caldecott committee does not enjoy—fewer books and so a greater amount of time which can be devoted to the discussion of each book. The third or fourth hour we spent with each book brought more and more insights and understandings. We clarified more and more our judgments. Much of this discussion took place without reference to the criteria, and the ultimate decision rested upon returning to them, placing what we had learned against them. Even so, when I returned from ALA, following a year of many discussions, a student in the young adult literature class I taught this spring gave me yet another insight into *Crutches* that no one on the committee had grasped. The point of this is that the degree of discussion is deeper but never exhaustive in an award committee—this ties to Willett's suggestion that continuous revelation about award winning books is necessary to, in the end, determine their true merit. But award committees can come most closer to this than can those engaged in more casual, less intensive discussions.

Dicey's Song (Atheneum, 1982) is a book with which I am intimately familiar. It was the book selected for the Newbery Award the year I was on the committee. Following that I wrote an article for *School Library Journal* (Nov. 1983) scrutinizing it. In my initial discussion of this book, I did not fully recognize or appreciate the lyric quality of the text, a song in itself, nor did I understand how Voigt achieved it. I did not appreciate the many symbols which make a cohesive work. I did not understand Voigt's subtle method of characterization. But the depth with which this book was discussed led to insights that simply could not come in any other way. Once again, those insights

were not complete as the book received its award (they are still coming) but the understanding reached far beyond casual scrutiny.

Discussion for awards and distinctions, therefore, differs in manner and degree, but not in basic purpose or structure from any evaluative experience.

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Guidelines for Book Discussions

Ginny Moore Kruse and Kathleen T. Horning
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ALL PERSPECTIVES AND VOCABULARIES ARE CORRECT. THERE IS NO "RIGHT" ANSWER OR SINGLE CORRECT RESPONSE.

1) Listen openly to **what** is said, rather than **who** says it.
2) Respond to the comments of others, rather than merely waiting for an opportunity to share your comments.
3) Talk with **each other**, rather than to the discussion facilitator.
4) Comment to the group as a whole, rather than to someone seated near you.

LOOK AT EACH BOOK FOR WHAT IT *IS*, RATHER THAN WHAT IT IS *NOT*.

1) Make positive comments first. Try to express what you liked about the book and why. (e.g. "I like the illustrations because....")
2) After **everyone** has had the opportunity to say what they liked about the book, you may talk about difficulties you had with a particular aspect of the book. Try to express difficulties as questions, rather than declarative judgments on the book as a whole. (e.g. "Would Max's dinner really still have been warm?" rather than "That would never happen.")
3) Avoid recapping the story or booktalking the book. There is not time for a summary.
4) Refrain from relating personal anecdotes. The discussion must focus on the book at hand.
5) Try to compare the book with others on the discussion list, rather than other books by the same author or other books in your experience.

Commentary on an Approach to Discussion: The CCBC Guidelines for Book Discussion

Holly Willett

It's 3:30 on a Friday afternoon. In the conference room at the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) people are gathering for the monthly discussion of newly published children's and young adult books. Most of them will have read all of the nine or ten books chosen by Ginny Moore Kruse and Kathleen Horning three or four weeks before, and all of them come voluntarily to discuss the books. Some of them may have driven for two hours or more to participate in the discussion. The only requirement is that participants have read some of the books to be discussed—no spectators allowed! Today the group may include a children's librarian, an elementary school teacher, a writer or illustrator, a school library media specialist, a preschool teacher, university students from various disciplines (both undergraduate and graduate students), university faculty members, and a staff writer for the local newspaper. Some members of the group may have multiple connections with children's books, such as the teacher who also works in a children's bookstore or the librarian who is also a parent. For the next two hours, this varied group will discuss the books, following the guidelines written by Ginny Moore Kruse and Katy Horning and reproduced on the preceding page.

When Kruse began the monthly book discussions in 1979 with the assistance of Susan C. Griffith, they did not have guidelines. While the discussions were wide-ranging and intense, Griffith and Kruse realized that it was very easy to find fault with a book and spot its weaknesses. Sometimes it was difficult to remember a book's strengths when people started with a negative approach. It was possible to leave a discussion feeling that children's books were not being done very well. Books were not being appreciated for their positive attributes, and perhaps participants were not being led to expand their abilities to evaluate books. Hence, unwritten guidelines

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were developed. In 1985, Kruse and Katy Horning wrote out the guidelines. Since then, experience with the guidelines has led to some modifications and fine tuning.

The three basic principles of the CCBC book discussion guidelines can be applied to any discussion for the purpose of evaluation: (1) Begin with the positive, (2) welcome all views, however expressed, and, (3) keep to the matter at hand. As Kruse and Griffith found, it is easy and tempting to launch an attack without stopping to consider the strengths of a book. The same is true when one is evaluating a program, a procedure, a building, etc.; the positive aspects can be forgotten or ignored. To use Lynn MacDonald's words, we have a "deficit model" of how to evaluate. A better balance is struck if the positive is voiced first. It may take some looking to find it, but most books and situations have something to be said in their favor. Interestingly, what one person views as a positive, another may see as a negative. Persons who disagree with someone else's positive statement should wait until all positive ideas are expressed before making their negative comments. In discussions where the relationships among the participants involve a hierarchy, this issue is especially sensitive, but in any group, it is important that ideas be criticized, not the person who holds them. Hence, the second principle, welcome all views.

In addition to possible disagreements, there are many occasions when discussion may be used for evaluation with as disparate a group as that which meets to discuss new books at the CCBC. Clerical staff, parents, children, representatives of community agencies, teachers, all may have valuable insights to contribute, but their vocabularies and agendas may not be those of children's librarians. The guidelines suggest listening to the content of what is said, responding to group members, and commenting to the entire group. A capable facilitator assists people to appreciate and understand all points of view, acting as a translator and group memory. It is easy to think that there are just two points of view for any issue, but in reality there are many more than two. Because of the multiplicity of opinions, the third principle becomes crucial.

Keeping to the matter at hand means using the available time well, which is why there are no summaries or booktalks as part of the discussion at the CCBC and why personal anecdotes or comparisons to books not on the list are discouraged. The

expectation is that as many people as possible have read the books and that reading is the shared experience that everyone has, whereas personal stories and comparisons with other books or events may not be meaningful to all participants. The same should be true in evaluating other kinds of phenomena—participants should have a shared basis for discussion. Keeping to the matter at hand also means that a complete picture is desired, that the book or the situation should be seen as a whole. And in order to do this, the principles of being sure that the positive is stated and welcoming all views help to achieve the goal of keeping to the matter at hand.

Does the CCBC method meet its objective of helping people appreciate children's and YA books? We decided to test it in a very simple pretest–posttest design without a control group. As preparation for the Institute on Evaluation Strategies and Techniques for Public Library Children's Services, participants received a list of five books to read before arriving in Madison; the books were to be discussed in small groups during the book evaluation session, following the CCBC guidelines. After reading the books and before the discussion, participants filled out a one-page questionnaire about their responses, which included such questions as "To whom would you recommend this book?" and "What is your overall rating of the book?" After the discussion, the participants again filled out the questionnaire for each title.

In general, after the discussion participants rated the books higher and indicated more uses. That is, there were fewer ratings of Poor or Marginal and more ratings of Very Good and Excellent. More of the participants said they would recommend purchasing the books after the discussion than before. Although chi-square tests of a number of variables revealed only modest changes at the .20 and .30 level—which are not statistically significant—t tests of independent means on the overall ratings found that two of the five books were rated significantly higher after discussion, at the .02 level and the .05 level, respectively. The other books did not show significant gains in ratings, but only one of the five books showed slightly more negative responses after discussion than before. One would probably not expect to see great changes after a few minutes of discussion. The testing and its results are certainly a limited, though intriguing glimpse at the possible outcomes of discussion.

The CCBC monthly book discussions are held for the purpose of introducing new children's and YA books to those interested and to encourage the discussion of materials created for the young. No awards are given, though special book discussions are held in December to discuss books which may be on the lists of the Newbery, Caldecott, Batchelder, and Coretta Scott King Award committees. The award discussions at the CCBC are carried out using the CCBC guidelines and the balloting procedures of the Association for Library Service to Children and are intended to provide opportunities to improve discussion and evaluation skills and to understand the award decision-making process. In an informal atmosphere, such as the monthly book discussions at the CCBC, there is no need to arrive at consensus. In situations where an agreement or a decision is desired, some mechanism must be built into the discussion process for arriving at a group result. Simple balloting—one participant, one vote—is the usual method. In other situations, more elaborate procedures are necessary, such as the weighted balloting that is done in the book award committees sponsored by the Association for Library Service to Children (Peltola, 1979). Weighted ballots require participants to rank the possible choices and result in a possibly more refined distinction among the alternatives. The Newbery and Caldecott Award procedures also stipulate that at least eight of the fifteen committee members must rank a book first in order for that book to be given the award.

Although we have examined book discussion in some detail and have outlined methods and contexts for book discussion, evaluating books is not the only purpose for which structured discussion is appropriate. For the sake of a balanced perspective and a democratic process, the discussion method outlined here may be used to evaluate programs, policies, procedures, facilities, services, possibly even personnel with the "group" limited to the supervisor and the subordinate. Imagine sitting down with a group of colleagues and relevant others to discuss the summer reading program. Imagine beginning the discussion with all the things people liked about the program, instead of starting with the areas believed to be weak. It is both more reassuring and more realistic to give staff some positive support so that any weaknesses can be dealt with positively.

The CCBC guidelines were designed and developed through experience in small group discussions centering on books. I have tried to suggest how the guidelines function not only in book discussion but how they might apply in other contexts as well. Often after a CCBC book discussion meeting, I find that my involvement with those particular books has only just begun, that I will go on to read reviews of the books or continue the discussion with students or colleagues. Just as one discussion is not the final word on any book, so structured discussion of most things is part of a continuing process of evaluation. Long after a building is built or a program is completed or a procedure is implemented, those involved will be debating the merits of the building, the program, and the procedure. Like other forms of evaluation, discussion is meant "to improve, not prove."

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V. Feedback into Planning

Introduction

In the long run, the purpose of evaluation is to provide additional information so that decision making about library activities may be improved. However, evaluation results are not automatically included as information for decision making. The evaluator must convince decision makers that the information obtained from evaluations is both accurate and relevant to an important aspect of the library's activities. In libraries where little formal evaluation has been undertaken in the past, it may take some time to have information derived from evaluations used in the decision-making process. Even where the environment is conducive to accepting evaluation results, political or financial concerns may override what appears to be clear evidence to support specific decisions.

This section includes two pieces. The first is an edited transcript of a speech by Jane Goodwin, Coordinator for Evaluation and Information Development, Fairfax (Virginia) County Public Library. Her message states that in order to ensure that evaluation studies contribute to managerial decision making, evaluators must understand how the questions asked, data collected, and recommendations made fit into the library's decision making framework. The role of timely, accurate communication is critical in reducing perceived threat while also supporting action derived from evaluation results. The second piece is the whimsical "Reporting the

Results of Library Research" by W. Boyd Rayward. We will let this treat speak for itself.

Although evaluation is a broad and sometimes quite intricate responsibility, we believe we have presented you with a context and some techniques and procedures that will allow you to start an evaluation program for your children's services. We therefore ask you to go forth and evaluate.

The Politics of Evaluation

Jane Goodwin

As Coordinator of Evaluation and Information Development in the Fairfax County Public Library, I seem to hold a unique position in Libraryworld. The Office of Evaluation and Information Development (OEID) was created in 1982 by director Sam Clay, soon after his coming to Fairfax County, to provide information needed to guide decision making. Fairfax County is in Northern Virginia near Washington D.C. Steady growth in the County over the last two decades has resulted in a number of commercial centers with residential areas in a cluster development pattern. The 400 square mile county area is served by 22 branches including six regional libraries, nine community branches and seven mini-libraries. The System has no central library. The County's population is currently about 750,000, with over 930,000 expected by the year 2000. Fairfax County is a prosperous area and has, on the whole, well-educated residents who are demanding library users. It seems that everyone has gifted and talented children!

OEID is staffed by two persons. In addition to the Coordinator there is a full time assistant who is also a librarian with experience in children's services, mini-branch management, information services, and she is an expert online searcher. The Office has four formal responsibilities and many additional tasks that are covered by that part of our job descriptions that say "other duties as required." Officially we are responsibile for all evaluative studies conducted within the library system whether they are systemwide in scope, branch, or department specific. I have said to my assistant that we are going to know when we have really been successful in this job when we eliminate the need for our positions; when everyone thinks of evaluation when they are planning a library service or service enhancement. She has assured me that no one is ever going to want to deal with all the piles of data that come into the office at the end of a large survey. I often plead with my colleagues to remember, when planning an evaluation, to call us early in the project. We will assist in designing the evaluation component from the beginning of the project. We are not cheerful when called after data has been

collected and no plans for analysis are in place. OEID also serves as a clearinghouse. As much as possible we want to evaluate a service once, not over and over again at different sites. By maintaining an awareness of what evaluation efforts are in progress throughout the Library, we can reduce duplicate efforts.

A second responsibility assigned OEID is to conduct feasibility studies for new services that the Library is considering. These studies may be requested by the Director, the Library Board or other Library Administration members. Usually these papers are prepared with a staff task force.

A third responsibility is the oversight of online information services. FCPL offers access to DIALOG, Vu/Text and BRS at the regional libraries. All regional information services librarians are trained online searchers. As a fourth responsibility we also explore and recommend new technologies for the delivery of information services. At the present time we are looking at a variety of CD–ROM products to be on regional information desk terminals.

The last two responsibilities may seem a little out of place considering the first two tasks but OEID is in the Technical Operations Division. The Division operates with thin staffing levels and these responsibilities are well suited to our interests and experience.

The topic I have been asked to address is the "Politics of Evaluation." The abstract in the Institute notebook stresses the importance of understanding how evaluation contributes to managerial decision making. I also want to stretch beyond that statement and work with a broader concept. For this presentation let us accept the definition that politics is the science of understanding power as it relates to the organization. This power includes decision making but it also includes the ability to implement a decision. Usually the authority to make decisions is formally placed in the hands of one or a few persons. Whether the decision is carried out or implemented successfully is really the work of many. There is assigned recognized power and there is unofficial or personal power. When planning and dealing with evaluation it is critical to success that we develop an understanding of formal and informal power, and the

power holders as related to the issue we are trying to evaluate. That is what I mean by the phrase "the politics of evaluation"—the understanding and use of formal and informal power in the evaluation process.

I have identified five groups or entities that I think it would be wise to remember when planning an evaluation in a library setting. First there is the community, the environment that supports the library. Second is library management, the administration, usually the formal authority for decision making. Third are your colleagues, department heads and managers of other subunits in the library. Fourth is the staff and finally, the fifth powerholding group is the public. The public for us has always meant library users. At FCPL we have not conducted evaluation efforts outside the library although we make extensive use of data compiled by other County agencies.

We have heard it a hundred times this week that evaluation is much more than measurement. It is a process of checking to see how close we are to a goal and recommending decision points that move the organization closer to the goal. The process involves at least these steps: you must clarify goals and objectives. You have to identify the question that needs to be answered and the pieces of information that are needed to answer that question. You must identify the audience for the evaluation. Who is going to use the information you collect? Another step is conducting the study, the measurement activity that collects the data. The next step is very important; you must convert the data into information and that can only be meaningful when the process analyzes the data against the previously determined goals and objectives. Then the next step is to prepare the recommendations based on the results and finally, to disseminate the results with recommendations.

Each evaluation effort has at least one primary audience, the target audience, but there are many secondary audiences. Each primary and secondary audience has their own perceptions, their own expectations, their own need for the information, and probably, they are approaching the information with a different knowledge base. Each of the groups identified earlier may hold different stakes or interests in the decisions that are made with the evaluation results. These stakeholder interests should come forward at the formulation of the goals and objectives, but do not count on it

happening. Stakeholder interests change. If you fail to recognize and deal with these interests, there can be devastating results from your evaluation efforts.

First let us discuss the community political situation because it is very important that you understand the political climate that supports the library. There often is a difference between who has the authority to make a decision and who really decides an issue. Learn what's hot and what's not. If education is hot in your community, emphasize the importance of homework support when evaluating children's services. But if education is not hot, if your constituents feel overwhelmed by the resources devoted to supporting education, then it is not wise to build an objective and evaluate quality or quantity of library services for children around measures that report homework support.

Know what works and what sells. Much of the information we assemble in OEID may be used in a budget justification. This ultimate use of the information is always a part of my thinking when planning an evaluation. We know that right now the County budget office is keen on formulas. The Library has developed a page staffing formula to assess the number of pages needed in a library based on several factors including circulation, in–library use, building configuration, and collection arrangement. The Library is also attempting to create an information services staffing formula based on the annual estimate of information questions, quantity of programs and "off–desk" responsibilities. In addition, the Library is in the very early stages of developing a children's services staffing formula based on the objective that the library will have a children's services person available in the building during all hours that community and regional libraries are open and that a children's services person will be assigned to the information desk during afternoon, evening and weekend hours. The formula will also include some demographic characteristics of the service area. In support of demand for children's programming, we are recording the number of program turnaways—those children who attempt to sign up for a program and are turned away because the registration is full. This data will help measure the unmet need for children's programming. We do not know if such a formula will successfully document the need for additional children's services staff, but it is an example of how we are

trying to accommodate what we know works now in our County government, our supporting community.

My advice is to recognize political reality and try to work within imposed constraints. Political realities will have a definite impact on the use of evaluative information generated for decision making. The continuing saga about parking at Fairfax City Regional Library (FX) is a good example. This library was once the system's central facility in the old town center. It still contains the historical collection, largely noncirculating, and a special business collection. We know that 95% of FX users drive to the library. The library has hopelessly inadequate parking with 60 parking slots for a regional library that should, according to the facilities plan, have at least 150 spots. We have collected abundant information about this critical parking problem. I have rented a time clock so I can tell you the average number of minutes people stay in the library (20 minutes), and the range of time people stay (3 minutes to 3 hours). I can tell you what jurisdiction they come from to use FX. I can tell you the percent that park illegally, and I have pages of nasty comments from angry patrons about the parking situation at that library. I have the information, recommendations are clear, but nothing is going to happen until the County and the town decide who is going to pay for the parking garage that must be built. Another alternative is to remove those special collections and thereby reduce the demand for parking. Not a chance. Those materials have always been at that library and will stay in spite of all the gathered information that demonstrates the problems facing people who want to use the collections.

Another example of facing community political reality is the story of the small branch library that will never close. Every library system probably has one of these stories. This 12,000 square foot branch occupies a store front in an apartment complex built on a lakeside. FCPL opened a new glitzy regional library about half a mile from this tiny branch. The plan was that the small library would close when the new one opened. We prepared all kinds of analyses to show cost inefficiencies and low use. When word got out that the library would close, the community rose up in a furor. Senior citizens live in the apartments around the small branch and community services for seniors are hot. I am convinced that this branch will continue to live forever

circulating less than 4000 items a month despite all recommendations based on sound management information.

The politics of dealing with library management has been mentioned several times during the institute. Most that we do at FCPL is in response to library management's need for information. Our role is to support this need. There are several steps in the evaluation process whether the idea for the effort originates with you or is brought to you. First of all, start with a question that needs an answer. Whenever possible, work with the one who is asking the question. Sometimes I do not have that privilege because the question comes from the Library Board and I hear it asked through the Director. But whenever possible, go to the one who is seeking the information. Understand their concerns. Understand if they are or are not willing to act on an answer to the question. Do they care enough to act? They must buy into the need for the information before you spend your effort collecting and analyzing data. I always ask, when someone comes to me with a question, "What will we do differently if we have this information?"

Once the question has been clarified, identify the pieces of information that are needed to answer the question. You must determine the primary audience for the information; it should be the one who asked the question in the first place, but it is not always. The secondary audiences should also be considered. Then you must decide if these audiences are going to accept the information that you plan to generate as an appropriate response to the question. Understand how good the information has to be. There is definitely a level of effort versus quality of data trade–off. You do not want to waste time doing more than is needed, but you certainly want the information good enough to be accepted. Find out how soon the information is needed and negotiate a realistic timetable. Determine the methodology to be used to collect the data and be sure that management approves the amount of effort that is to be spent on collecting that data. These costs include expenses for collecting and tabulating data, disruption to normal workflow, and staff time consumed by the effort. Management must have a clear understanding of these costs. Report the results and recommendations in a timely manner. Observe the timetable you negotiated. Then, perhaps the most difficult part,

push for discussion of the recommendations and prompt implementation. Do all that you can to see that what you have generated does not get buried.

There are also political considerations concerning your colleagues' role in the effort. They may not appear to be directly involved with what you are evaluating. It may not be clear that they will be affected by the results of your evaluation effort, but often the results may recommend a reallocation of resources within the organization to accomplish an objective. This can become a turf issue. I suggest that you keep your co–workers informed of all evaluation plans. Encourage other department managers to look for information in your study that they can use, expand the ownership. Let them share in your effort if possible, but keep the information pieces related. Do not explore too much at one time or the effort may be muddled. Be up front with colleagues about the disruptions they may experience during the data collection phase. Be very aware of any special activities that may be happening in your library during the time that you are planning to collect data. Delay your effort if you cannot do anything to resolve a potential conflict. It is better to postpone than to collect data and then have to apologize for it later. For example, at FCPL we are installing a new circulation system during the next fiscal year; I will be very careful about any data collection that I ask the staff to manage during this busy time.

Staff have great power over the success of most evaluation efforts. We depend on staff to adhere to procedures and collect accurate data. We depend on staff to correctly understand the point of the evaluation effort so that they can respond appropriately to public queries. It is crucial that we understand, as best we can, staff concerns about an evaluation activity before it begins. Evaluation activities are always perceived as being done to some person or group unless you have successfully conveyed the concept that the activities are conducted with the person or group. This is a very important concept. A negative staff reaction to an evaluation can range from outright sabotage to simple indifference. Staff attitudes all along that continuum will result in poor data and misrepresentations to the public—that can be very dangerous. The best defense against this abuse of staff power is communication. Inform staff fully and honestly about the purpose of the evaluation. Try to use regular communication channels. Use newsletters, and regularly scheduled meetings to inform staff about an upcoming

evaluation effort rather than call special meetings. Use these channels unless you know they are faulty. If you know there is a poor link in the communication chain, be aware and work around it. Try to keep the effort within the normal management framework of the library. Brief staff on the evaluation methodology, and explain how the results are going to be used. Make every effort not to appear to punish them with the data they are asked to collect. Report the results back to staff.

Staff hostility to an evaluation activity may not be related to the effort at hand. If you cannot successfully separate the evaluation activity from what you have identified as the cause of the hostility, it may not be the right time to conduct the evaluation. Understand the staff's position. It is likely that they are the biggest stakeholder in the issue you are trying to evaluate. They may be closest to the activity that is under investigation. It is most likely that they are the group that will have their work changed as a result of the evaluation. A common reaction from an individual or from branch staff is their feeling that a systemwide decision is inappropriate for them because their situation is different. They may resist being evaluated as a part of the whole. You may encounter this reaction in a competitive multi-branch system. You must respond to this attitude or you may not be able to conduct the evaluation and gather meaningful results.

If staff are collecting the data, they must be carefully trained to understand and follow the procedures. It is easy to become lax about training if a study is conducted regularly. We do not conduct studies or evaluations by memo. With the high turnover among FCPL staff, the procedures are always new to some members. When we are preparing for a systemwide study, we meet with a survey coordinator assigned by each branch. We make the training a pleasant event with coffee and cookies. We explain the purpose of the evaluation. All procedures are reviewed with examples. We discuss the preparations needed to ready the branch for the survey such as form numbering and sign posting. We offer suggestions for training branch staff. We always recommend that branches have a trial run to gear up for the real survey period. If the branch survey coordinators are responsible for tabulating results, we carefully present the process. After every survey, we ask the branch coordinators to complete a simple, one-page evaluation form that asks the following kinds of questions: What would have

improved the training session? Were there any unusual incidents in your branch during the data collection period that we need to know so that we can better understand the results? If a questionnaire was used, we ask if the public experienced any difficulties with the form. Branch managers are also encouraged to add their comments. The information from these questionnaires helps us interpret the collected data and may reveal staff objections or mistrust of the process.

When planning an study, remember to keep procedures as simple and as little intrusive as possible. Collect no more data than is needed. Be as careful when developing a form that staff will use as you are about the questionnaire you distribute to the public. If tally sheets are used, post them at all service points. Just remember how many tally sheets are posted so that all will be collected. Change the tally sheets often. We do not know why, but staff report that they are more likely to remember to record a hash mark if the sheet does not look full and messy.

Depersonalize the evaluation. Focus on group activities to evaluate unless it is a performance appraisal. Identify factors that influence the quality of total service to the public, not on the individual action. A good example of that concept was the cooperative reference accuracy study conducted in 1984 with Montgomery County (MD) and Arlington County (VA) libraries. We wanted to know how accurate were the responses given to telephone reference questions and the manner or service characteristics demonstrated when the response was given. We wanted to know if incorrect information was given and why. What were the causes of incorrect information? Was the information out-of-date? Was the response incomplete or totally incorrect? Did the staff person not understand the question? We made it clear from the beginning that we were not reviewing the performance of individuals; we only looked at system and branch performance. Branch results were distributed to branch managers and were not included in the final study report. We were looking for systemwide corrective actions that would improve performance. We did not tie recorded transactions to branch schedules and, therefore, maintained the anonymity of the staff who handled individual transactions. Another feature of the accuracy study involved staff directly in the evaluation process. The study, conducted without special funding, utilized information service staff as surrogate patrons. Personnel from one

library system called branches of other participating systems. Serving as unobtrusive callers, these information services staff became information consumers. Their participation as callers heightened their sensitivity about the way they responded to a telephone question.

When considering staff attitudes toward an evaluation, the question of whether or not to bring in an objective outsider to manage the process may arise. There are trade–offs. Bringing in an outsider may increase the "done unto us" attitude toward the effort. Sometimes the expertise to conduct the study may not exist in–house. You may realize that bringing in outside talent will add credibility to the results in the eyes of the primary audience. These factors must be considered in relationship to the individual project.

As stated earlier it is important to report results and recommendations to staff that participated. You may expect some objections to the report and these concerns may be passed on to the evaluation's primary audience. You may not choose to formally include staff objections in the final report, but you can share them informally with management. If you can anticipate that the report recommendations will cause negative reactions from staff, you may need to explain to them that the results are presented to them for their information, not for their approval, and not for their endorsement.

The fifth group to be considered in this discussion is the public, for us that has meant library users. It may not be wise to inform the public of an evaluation activity if the knowledge might disrupt or change their normal library behavior which you are attempting to study. If the evaluation activity does not intrude on their behavior, there is no reason to publicize the effort. If we are distributing a self–administered questionnaire, we post a sign on the door saying "Library Survey Today" and on the reverse side of the door there is another sign, usually in vivid electric yellow, that says "Did you remember to turn in your form?" That is all the publicity that is done. Most often you are evaluating normal activity and you want to measure business–as–usual. Library users often see a hidden agenda behind a survey. They fear that a survey means services are to be curtailed. If you ask them about preferred hours, they assume there is

going to be a cutback, maybe even a library closing. If you ask about their use of service, they predict the service is going to be changed and certainly not changed to their liking. FCPL users often ask staff when given a self– administered questionnaire, "What do you want me to say?" Staff response is important. We provide scripts and help staff understand that their off–hand remarks can be taken very seriously. Neutral responses are always best. FCPL users are very cooperative; public survey response rates are often 70 percent or higher. We are very careful about how many times a year we approach them with a survey form.

All survey questionnaires may look alike to a library user. When designing a self–administered form, there are several factors to remember. First, provide clear instructions on the form itself and give some examples. If you direct them to circle the correct answer, draw a circle around the word "circle." If you want an X in a box, provide examples. Offer a clear reason why the question is being asked that is accurate but fairly neutral. Give advice about where to go if they have questions about the form or survey. Be sure to provide a place for comments. You will learn much from these remarks. Include directions about where to take the form when it is completed. Let the respondent be in control of depositing the questionnaire. Do not forget to add a thank you at the bottom of the form. Insure anonymity in their responses. This may be difficult in a very small library. Anonymity became a problem when conducting an in–library materials use study during a quiet evening in a mini–branch. The library's lone patron was dutifully returning the materials he used to the collection boxes when he finished with them. He became concerned when he noticed that the librarian was removing the materials and recording them on log sheets. He wanted to know why she was checking up on what he was reading. This incident helped us know that this method of data collection may not be suitable at all libraries.

Avoid creating expectations by offering unrealistic options on a survey questionnaire. When offering users an opportunity to indicate their preferred service hours, offer them choices that can be reasonably fulfilled. If offering a choice of services, you pick the options. If you ask open–ended questions about services and hours, you may only see answers such as more books and 24 hour–a–day openings.

Evaluating children's services adds other concerns. Identifying a methodology to collect the data can be particularly challenging when dealing with children. At FCPL we have used interviewing as a method of including children in a building study and in a materials availability study. Parents are understandably wary of having their children interviewed. We train staff interviewers to deal with adults who insist on answering for the child. If they cannot successfully redirect the question for the child's answer, the adult's responses are recorded, although that interview may not be included in the tabulation. If during the interview, the interviewer discovers that the child is outside the age range planned for the survey, the interview is still completed. Every effort is made to make the child feel that they are a competent and valued respondent. Our experience has shown that children are delighted to have the adult interviewer's attention. A small reward such as a bookmark is also appreciated by the child. Stickers are good rewards because they can identify children already interviewed.

Whenever possible, pursue evaluation efforts when you are most certain that the results will be used. Staff energy, time, and goodwill, never mind your own frustration, are too valuable to waste. Remember that cost does not equal value. A simple evaluation effort carefully planned, implemented and analyzed, may result in exactly the information that is needed. If you are new at evaluation, start small and keep it simple. Be prepared to learn from your efforts, especially about the politics of your library. Be ready to negotiate throughout the process. Remember that library roles and goals were determined through negotiation. Decisions made with evaluation recommendations may not present long-term forever-good solutions to any problem. The resulting actions may not catapult the library all the way to goal achievement. But they may represent a compromise that is acceptable to all the stakeholders, and move the library closer to that moving target.

In conclusion, even though she is not here, let me use some of Joey Rodger's words of advice: "Remember that you collect no data before its time."

Reporting the Results of Library Research: To Inform Others, to Improve Practice, and to Add to Knowledge in the Field

W. Boyd Rayward

Top of the Town, Winter 1981, p. 147-154.

Once upon a time in a land-not called Utopia, where everyone read books more or less as they do now, where libraries were supported not much better, and where librarians were instituted about the same, a children's librarian decided she would do some research. Her name was Hermione Winterbourne. She was a large, intelligent, rather unusual person. She worked in the Cognitibus Library in the Commonwealth Tri-Cities Conglomerate System (CTCCS). Her best friend was Nathaniel Bitbody. He too was a children's librarian. He was small, round, and soft, and had a straggly beard. Hermione and Nathaniel lived together and everyone assumed that they would eventually get married.

One day when all the children's librarians in the system were meeting to examine and select books, records, video tapes, filmstrips, audio, video, and holographic cassettes, and programs for the more immediate future when they had become all the rage, Hermione told them that she wanted to do research.

The comprehensive were startled. "Research!" one of them exclaimed. "That's what

What kind would you do?"

"Oh, real scientific research," Hermione replied.

"What would you study?" enquired Nathaniel.

"Well, I'm not sure yet. That libraries are good things and children's librarians are important."

There was a nod of approval from the group at this because even in Nirvnanium, that distant, fabled land, the libraries were having acute funding trouble. In Cogitatibus, the director had even suggested that the children's book collection should be integrated with the other book collections. He thought that if this were done elderly or barely literate adults would use it and the children's librarians could be assigned to general duties. This idea had dismayed the children's librarians in the system.

The next day Hermione Scientiarum decided she would take her idea to the director of the system. He was called Theophilus Grouchmore, but he was quite a nice man really. He sat in an enormous office that was guarded by a secretary who was known as the Dragon Lady. She even terrified Theophilus, people said. Theophilus listened to Hermione very carefully.

"But I don't understand what you are really going to do," he said crisply after a short while. "You are speaking in generalities. What are you going to prove and how are you going to prove it? Why should we be interested in this, whatever it is? What is it going to cost? What do you want me to do? What do you need from the library?"

Hermione stuttered in reply, for the truth was she hadn't thought out her ideas very thoroughly.

"Really," she said, waving her hands, "it's terribly important not to do something without knowing what will happen, don't you think? You can't just do away with children's librarians. Children's librarians have always been important at Cumminwood."

"True," said Theophilus, "but that was then, this is now. Now may be time for a change."

"Don't you think we ought to get information about the effectiveness of children's librarians in the system before making a change in personnel policy?"

"Hurrumph!" said Theophilus. "What kind of information? And how are we going to get it? People talk about research as though it were fruit growing on a tree and they say, Let me go and pick some; it's just what we need; it will do us good. They don't realize how difficult it is to do and apply." Theophilus was getting into his stride. "And as for library research, there's so little of it and so much of what there is bad or ill conceived. Just look at the library literature that is supposed to report it: bitsy, superficial, insignificant, irrelevant. Hell's bells!" he exclaimed (eschatological exclamations were with it in Nirvnanium), "I've got to act decisively and soon. The budget is at a critical stage and the board wants economy and reductions. I can't sit around forever waiting for someone to come up with evidence about something. Wooliness," he spluttered. "Silliness. Hurrumph!"

He paused for a moment, looking keenly at Hermione, who had gone rather red during this outburst. "I tell you what," he said more gently, "you go away and make an appointment to see me one week from now. If you have a good idea and can convince me, I'll give you what support I can. But I want results by the end of the year."

As you can see, Theophilus was a softie really, and he had a very astute notion of Hermione's abilities.

Later that evening, Hermione described her interview to Nathaniel.

"Well," he said, "I suppose you were a bit vague, but at least he will give you some support."

Hermione did not reply. She was turning Theophilus' comments over in her mind.

"The crucial thing, Nat," she said, "is how to convince Theo and others like him that children's librarians are needed. That's what I want to prove. I really believe we are, but just how are we and our work special? Perhaps one of the most important things

is the kind of relationships we develop with kids—maybe in helping them in their reading. What do you think?"

Nat had some ideas about this, and the discussion quickly gathered momentum. Phrases like *reading skills, cognitive development, fantasy play, maturation, ethical values, problem solving,* and *emotional growth* were tossed about.

"That's the children's side," said Nat eventually. "What about us, the children's librarians?" Then they discussed the nature of the relationship that seemed to develop between the librarian and the children. What encouraged it? What hindered it? How was it best categorized and described?

"What about the library?" said Nat.

"Easy," said Hermione. "Collection development, guided reading, summer reading programs, dramas/plays, puzzles and game competitions, unstructured access to computers, creative use of Sensation Induction...."

"Cost effectiveness, resource allocation, staffing levels, administrative overheads, professional development," chimed in Nat. "Ugh! Where to begin?"

But Hermione was excited. She threw herself wholeheartedly into preparing for her interview with Theophilus. The week he had given her flashed by.

As she once again sat down in his office, she handed him a document boldly labeled "Proposal: A Study of the Role and Effectiveness of Children's Library Service in the Greensward Tri-Urban Conglomerate System (GTUCS)."

Theophilus glanced at it, riffled through the pages, and then placed it on the desk in front of him.

"Later for that," he said. "You tell me in your own words what you want to do."

So Hermione told him. She spoke simply and clearly, trying to keep in mind what his interests were. At one point, she referred to the proposal. There were certain technical problems in the research methodology she wanted to use and she hoped to get expert help from Nirvnanium Central University, the main campus of which was located in Cogitatibus. "I spell out the problem and the reasons for getting in a consultant in the proposal," she said, "but I assume you'd rather I didn't go into them now." Her voice rose in question.

"Certainly, certainly, hurrumph! Later!" said Theophilus.

At the end of five minutes, Hermione thought she had said enough and she rapidly listed on her fingers the kinds of support she hoped Theophilus would give her.

A brief silence ensued. She was a shrewd observer, perhaps shrewder than Theophilus, and she could tell he was impressed. But he was noncommittal when he did speak.

"I'll let you know what I think when I have read the paper." He gestured at the proposal and then stood up. "Back to work. Back to work." He made shooing gestures with his hands. "There's little time and much to be done. Can't have people lounging about all day thinking, can we? No. No. Hurrumph!"

Hermione did not know what to make of this. She feared the worst and began to feel very depressed. Nat took her out to dinner to cheer her up, but she was tense and a bit quarrelsome. They went to bed early.

Next morning, promptly at nine o'clock, Hermione was called to the videophone. It was Theophilus. She felt a pang of excitement and, because her hands had started to tremble, she faced the screen holding them behind her back. She smiled uncertainly at Theophilus.

"Well, young lady," he said briskly. "About that proposal of yours: you can go ahead with your research. All I can do is let you have some time off during working

hours, but you'll have to clear actual times with your supervisor. There's no money for a consultant. You talk to the people at Nirvnanium Central U.; maybe they'll help anyway." He reached over his desk to the videophone switch, but paused suddenly. "Oh! I'll want your report before the next full assembly of the Board of Library Governors." His image flickered out.

Hermione was left breathless by this. The full assembly of the Board of Library Governors was barely six months away. She wasn't even going to have until the end of the year.

"I can do it," she said confidently to Nat later. "At least, I can organize it. If we are to get solid results in that time, I'm going to need lots of help. How to get it is the problem. There are the others of us in the system. There are the branch heads and the central administrative staff. All will be involved to some extent."

Nat had some opinions about this from observing what had happened during the preceding week. "You have to involve the various groups from the beginning," he said. "They've got to have input. You've got to get them curious about what you're doing and what you might find. The planning stage of research like you want to do," he observed rather sententiously, "is actually a kind of preliminary reporting on it: writing and talking to different people with different interests so that they know enough to be sympathetic and cooperative and..." he fumbled for a word, "ah...unthreatened."

And in the next few weeks she reported in the most diverse kinds of ways on what she wanted to do and on the initial stages of her work. She spoke to children's librarians in the system, individually and in groups. She made a point of seeking out influential branch heads (especially her own) and briefing them. She wrote a number of memos. Some of her colleagues were eager to help; some were indifferent; some were covertly hostile. At Nirvnanium Central U. she began to meet weekly with a friendly statistician and two of the library school faculty. She read the literature. She developed questionnaires and interview schedules and special tests. She drew samples and learned how to code data sheets.

And as the time flew by, she kept various groups informed of developments. She addressed a staff meeting on the growth of children's services in the past decade. She drew up a fortnightly report for her branch head. It was a model of succinctness in its indication of what time she needed, why, and where it would be spent. On her own initiative she made an appointment to see Theophilus to give him a progress report.

And as the time flew by, sometimes she felt elation, sometimes despair. Sometimes she was so far down in the dumps she felt completely incompetent and unable to carry her work through to the end. Other times she felt confident, energetic, and marvelously resourceful. Sometimes she suspected that some of her colleagues in the system were sneering at her as pretentious and impractical—and sometimes they were and she was. She frequently snapped at Nathaniel. Once or twice, it seemed deliberately, she provoked a violent quarrel with him. Withdrawn and preoccupied, she could not stand being in the kitchen. She burned things, dropped things, misplaced things, cut her fingers. Nathaniel began to wish that she had never caught the bug for research. Eventually he couldn't stand it any longer and took over all the household chores that they had previously shared equally—though she was the better cook.

And the time flew by until at last it was only a week from the full assembly of the Board of Library Governors. And then Hermione made her first mistake.

Working until the early hours of the morning several days running, Hermione prepared a report on her work. It grew larger and larger and more and more complex. She described every stage of her thinking, every twist and turning in the development of her research. She explained why certain techniques were tried and abandoned; she discussed false leads, empty clues, disappointed hopes. The methodological section became a chronicle of what she had learned of statistics. She prepared graphs and figures and tables and charts. She spoke about variance and significance and levels of confidence and one– and two–tailed t–tests and partialing out zero–order correlations and rotating orthogonal axes. She justified, speculated, dilated, expatiated. And when she handed her thick, heavy report, which had been hastily copied and assembled, to Theophilus, she felt that she had accounted fully and completely for all that she had done. Not to put too fine a point on it, she was smug.

Theophilus, however, was exasperated. "I can't possibly read and assimilate this before the board meeting," he said, hefting the report in his hands. He turned the pages rapidly for a few minutes pausing here and there to read a heading, a sentence, the caption to a figure. "The summary list of recommendations and conclusions—where is it?" he demanded. "Where is it?"

Hermione admitted there wasn't one.

"Where is figure 6?" he asked. "I see 5 and 7 but no 6."

Hermione looked over his shoulder. "Oh, 7 is misnumbered," she said. "It's really 6. But it doesn't matter, that figure is not important."

"There is no way to present this to the board as it is," concluded Theophilus. He shook his head. "A bad business. A bad business. Hurrumph!" He thought for a moment. "*You* can make the report. I shall make a short time available on the agenda for you. There is interest in what you have been doing; everyone is aware of it. So you tell them yourself." He picked up the report and waved it at her. "Too long. Too long. Hurrumph."

And then Hermione made her second mistake.

The full assembly of the Board of Library Governors was very large and very august. There were thirty-five members from all the highest walks of life in Nirvnanium. The president was a hereditary governor, Sri Bombasticus Patheticum, a tall, thin man whom no one much liked. But he was an excellent chairman: he was mean and he wasted no time. Many were the garrulous and unprepared who had quailed and fallen silent before his inimical stare.

Hermione was elated at the idea of presenting her work to the board. She had done so much, come so far, she was sure she could convince them of the importance of her findings. Flipping through her report, she concluded that four tables and two figures were central and she decided she would present them to the board. There was no time to

have them transformed into multicolor 3–D screen format (the technicians needed two weeks' notice), so she decided to use an old–fashioned overhead projector and a heat transparency.

At the end of the second day of the board's meeting, the agenda item "Other Business" was reached. Theophilus respectfully indicated to the president that there were ten items to be dealt with under this heading if possible. Item number 7 was "A Report by Hermione Scientiarum on Children's Services in GTUCS."

Hermione went to the microphone, switched on the overhead projector, placed her first transparencies face down beside her, and began her report. First at some length she thanked all those who had helped her. She spoke softly, standing back from the microphone.

"Speak up. Speak up," said the president testily. She did but nothing much happened.

"Lean into the microphone," he snapped. "Bend it toward you."

Adjusting the microphone, Hermione began to talk about general problems of children's library service and how she became interested in them.

"Get to the point. Get to the point," interrupted the president, his rather protuberant eyes staring at her. This flustered Hermione and she decided to put on the first of her transparencies. As she announced what the transparency represented, she leaned forward to place it on the machine and her voice faded away so no one heard what it was. When she looked up she found the image was out of focus and half of it was off the screen.

"Excuse me," she said, and started to fiddle with the focus. Then she pushed the machine sideways but the image was also below the screen so she had to screw the movable feet to adjust the elevation. One or two of the governors peered at the screen,

pointing to the parts of the image. There were one or two loud mutters, "What is it? What is it?" and a slight rumble of talk began.

Hermione plunged into an explanation of the figures on the screen, but they were too small to read.

"Can't you magnify the image?" demanded the president. Hermione tried but not very successfully.

"Let me go on to the next," she said. "This is a figure that show the distribution of children's ages, the frequency of their interactions with the librarians, and adjusted figures for their volume of reading."

Very quickly, one after another, Hermione projected the transparencies, discussing them in considerable technical detail. In every case the figures and captions were small and most of the images were faint. The buzz of incidental conversation gradually increased. Eventually Sri Bombasticus knocked his gavel on the table.

"Thank you, Miss Scientiarum," he said. "I think we must leave your—ah—very interesting report there. Perhaps a copy could be left with the board secretary should members of the board wish to examine it. The next item of business, please."

Hermione gasped and sat down. She had not presented her conclusions. She looked at her watch. She had spoken for fifteen minutes. It was all over. She felt tears pricking at her eyelids.

After the meeting Theophilus came up to her. "That report of yours was no good," he said in his blunt way. "No good at all. Hurrumph! You didn't think about your audience and what their interests would be or how they would be feeling—tired out. heavens above, they've been meeting for nearly two days solid! I'm going to assume that you really did find out interesting things that we should know about. At the moment I'm acting on faith. In two weeks the board's executive committee will be meeting. I want distributable copies of the report and for you to give a fifteen-minute

talk on it. If you agree to this," he poked his finger at her, "You had better learn from today's disaster...," a strong word even for Theophilus.

Of course Hermione could do it and of course she could learn from her mistakes. She worked out the strategy with Nat. The verbal and the written reports would be complementary. She would cut down the written report by half. All the statistics and technical detail would be moved to an appendix. A clearly labeled table of contents would follow the title page. A summary, two pages in length, would follow that. Her language would be simple and clear. She would indicate what the problem was that she was investigating, why it was of interest, and what range of consequences might follow from studying it. And then she would tell them what she found and what she thought that meant for library services in the system. She would use no jargon. She would write in such a way that she did not intrude as a person in her account of the subject, so that what she was describing was not what *she* did but rather what was discovered and how the discoveries were made.

Her talk, on the other hand, would be more personal and informal. She would not use any props except a simple table showing percentages and she would make copies of this for each committee member.

She tried out her talk on Nat and he made some suggestions as to how to capture the interest of the committee. Indeed, he suggested that she start out with a major finding first, couched in the form: "Did you know...?" This would be dramatic and arresting.

Hermione was understandably nervous when she rose to speak before the executive committee. Sri Bombasticus was there, looking unfriendly. Theophilus was frowning. But all of her work of preparation was justified. She did not quite fill her fifteen minutes. The handout was distributed without any incident (she had fantasized that just at that point she would fall over, or Sri Bombasticus would look at her fiercely and she would drop her notes). There was a lively discussion in which Sri Bombasticus joined and one of the members of the committee complimented her on her work, saying he would take her report away and read it with great interest.

Theophilus was delighted. "Knew you could do it," he said gruffly afterwards. "Knew it all along. We'll issue a press release. I think a number of other libraries will be interested in what you have found. Draft one for me, please."

This was not an ending but a beginning. The press release led to a notice appearing in the *Nirvnanium National Library Journal*. As a result, a number of requests for Hermione's report were received. She was asked to give a talk at the library school at Nirvnanium Central University on the methodologies she had employed in her study. The research forum of the Nirvnanium Library Association asked her to report her findings at its annual meeting. She had a letter from the editor of the *Nirvnanium Library Quarterly*, a most prestigious and scholarly journal. He suggested she might like to write up her report as an article so that her contribution could become formally a part of the permanent record of knowledge in the field. She found the prospect of this a little alarming but Nathaniel encouraged her. He drew her attention to an article that had appeared in May 1980 in a foreign journal from another time called *College & Research Libraries*. The article was entitled "Publishing Library Research" and was written by W. Boyd Rayward—a very peculiar name to Nirvnanians like Hermione, Theophilus, and Nathaniel. The article suggested how one might go about publishing different kinds of reports for different kinds of audiences in a range of different kinds of journals. She tried to write an article for the *Quarterly* but it was rejected.

During all this time Hermione was nagged by the realization that there were a number of unanswered questions in what she had done. So she proposed to Theophilus that really she needed to do more research. He was interested but suggested she should get a grant from the National Library Authority to pursue any further research.

And this was another beginning. Hermione gradually devoted more and more time to research. As a result she also spent much more time writing and talking about her work. There were informal gatherings at which she spoke in Cogitatibus, and formal professional meetings of a regional and national kind. Some of her articles were popular and some were scholarly. It did not take her long to begin to publish important articles in the *Nirvnanium Library Quarterly*. And gradually years began to pass and what had been articles became books. Eventually Hermione was recognized as an

authority in her field; she was highly respected, she was frequently consulted, she was even appointed to the faculty of the library school. But she didn't like to teach and so she took a special consultant's job with the Nirvnanium National Library Authority.

And then one morning she received a letter that looked very official in a thick, creamy envelope embossed with the seal of Nirvnanium Central University. The letter was from the president of the university and informed her that she had been selected to be awarded an honorary doctor of humane letters degree in recognition of her contributions to library research. This was a great honor. Hermione looked forward to the ceremony with considerable excitement. And so did Nathaniel and Heliopola and Arkarnia. Heliopola and Arkarnia were the twin daughters of Nathaniel and Hermione, who had decided some years before to get married and have children.

At last the summer convocation of Nirvnanium Central University arrived. On the platform with Hermione and the other candidates for honorary degrees were a number of great and famous figures in Nirvnanium's society, including the now very frail and elderly Sri Bombasticus Patheticum, who no longer seemed as fierce to Hermione as he had all those many years ago.

Eventually her turn came. Her presenter, the statistician with whom she had worked on her first research project and who was now head of the department of statistics in the university, called out her name. She stood before the president while her presenter read out her citation. In sonorous phrases it chronicled the major events in her career, recalled some of her books, and some of her many professional honors.

Then the citation went on: "Above all, you have shown consummate skill in reporting your research. You have always written and spoken with a clear sense of purpose and of audience. Consequently the humblest librarian and the most learned library scholar have been able to respond to what you have said and written. Your style is simple, direct, clear, unforced. Your tone has been a judicious balance of the personal in speaking and the formal in writing. You have eschewed the use of jargon and always sought in the presentation of your ideas a rigorous logical development. Thus you have been able successfully and accurately to inform a wide range of professional and lay

persons about your work in such a way as to influence practice and to add significantly to the cumulation of knowledge in the field. Madam President, I have the honor to present to you Hermione Scientiarum as a candidate for the degree of doctor of humane letters *honoris causa.*"

In the audience Nathaniel glowed with pride, though Heliopola and Arkarnia had begun to wiggle, for the session was a long one. Elsewhere in the audience, unknown to Hermione and her family, sat another figure from her past who, white-haired and bent, leaned on a cane. This was Theophilus Grouchmore, whose rheumy old eyes became even redder and more moist as Hermione stood before the president. He said softly, clearing his throat, "Hurrumph! Hurrumph!"

Hermione Scientiarum lived to a great age. When she died, she was buried beneath a tombstone that read, simply, Library Researcher.

This is not the end of my story either, because Hermione immediately went to the librarian's heaven. Saint Jerome had been deputed by Saint Peter to guard the gate to this particular part of paradise. He greeted Hermione warmly when she presented herself to him and swung the gate open. Behold! Massed as far as the eye could see was a host of librarians chanting in welcome: *"Crescat scientia vita excolatur."**

This is the end of my story.

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*"Let knowledge grow from more to more and so be human life enriched." This just happens to be the motto of the University of Chicago also.

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